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MEDIA DEMOCRACY
Keith C. Burris

RUNNING ON NEW: THE HART CHOICES
William G. Mayer

American Indian spiritual politics
CHRISTOPHER VECSEY

CHURCH & STATE & CIRCUMSTANCES
FROM POLAND TO PAWTUCKET
The Editors *Maurice deG. Ford*

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Correspondence

Thanks for Küng

Erie, Pa.

To the Editors: Thank you for the article, "Dying with Christian Dignity," by Hans Küng (Jan. 27). I found very meaningful Father Küng's explanation of Christian dying as an integral part of the Christian's living relationship to the Creator.

SISTER ROSEMARY BRAEGER, O.S.B.

Cry with the mother

Sonoma, Calif.

To the Editors: I am at this moment, above all, a tired mother as I write in response to the letters concerning abortions and Mary Beth Gordon's friend found in your January 27 issue. It is the letters of Dr. Maillet and J. Martin Green, those final bland ripples that have reached shore and budged my tiny pebble. I am tired. I can simply hear no more right thinking on either side of the abortion issue. I find both sides, and particularly here those of the pro-life stance, to be stalwart, morally indignant, singularly without compassion, and therefore, totally uncompelling as persuasive forces to change any behavior whatsoever.

As a mother, I have learned principally one thing, humility and a healthy lack of surprise at all the vagaries of human behavior, my own above all. I am constantly aware of my limitations, follies, my meanness, and yet, my ability to transcend. It seems to me parenting encapsulates the total human dimension from suffering to glory. And, as a mother, I write and say I am not surprised that women seek abortions. Giving life is a terrible, terrible gift. It is the most awesome thing that has ever happened to me, and I am not speaking of the mere act of delivery, but it appears we have made pregnancy and motherhood a sacred cow, a false idol. We have simplified and glorified the mothering role with beautiful, meaningless clichés.The reality is much more magnificent and simultaneously much less wonderful. Pregnant women are simply no better or worse than any other segment of humanity and are certainly not privy to any superior code of behavior than any other person. Pregnancy is a time of great stress, of biological upheaval, and add to that often the threat of abandonment or the withdrawal of affection by family or the biological consort. How can we fail to understand the pain?

With all the emphasis on the abortion, we seem to have forgotten this happens to real suffering women, not just to aborted babies. The issue violates the intrinsic unity between mother and in-utero child. The abortionists concentrate on the woman; the pro-lifers on the child. And both are wrong. The abortionists have depersonalized the process by calling the baby fetal tissue, and the pro-lifers have done just as badly by making the woman merely a recipient or host womb to be as conveniently unburdened as the abortionists want to do, only they want to do it a mere nine months later down the road. Everyone is trying to do the pregnant woman a favor, and none of us needs such friends. I am always intrigued by the tales of various acts of charity being foisted upon the poor by well meaning do-gooders, and the resultant shock and dismay when the poor turn and spit in their benefactors' eyes with great contempt and walk off with the goodies. I have seen patronizing, ignorant, morally superior Birthright people, and, believe me, I'd never turn to them for help or send a friend of mine.

And so I'd like to say, yes, care about the unborn child, but cry with the mother, suffer with her. I find we need to celebrate life ritually and symbolically, but we must include both the pain and the promise. I sometimes wish my mothering role would disappear, but those moments are fleeting; but they need to be recognized and aired, for there can be no resurrection without the accompanying calvary. Let us not deprive pregnant women of their suffering with easy solutions on both sides. Let us not deprive them of the integrity of their suffering and its mystery, and above all, let us not deprive them of their faces and names. They are not shameful women, and they are certainly not statistics. This also calls to mind James Burtchaell's excellent article in the same issue on "A New Pastoral Method of Theology" for on no other single topic have I witnessed such a discrepancy between our professed belief in the sanctity of life and our actual treatment of the women involved.

And, finally, we must realize we are all capable of doing evil. Killing is part of the human malaise, only now we seem to be surprised and horrified that women are doing the killing. We all kill and are capable of killing whether it be legalized or not, whether it be through abortion, capital punishment, war, felony drunk driving, concentration camps, indifference to famine, etc. None of us is blameless. The only thing I can do is recognize my own impoverishment of spirit, my own ability to commit the same acts, and be grateful I have not been driven to do the same. I always remember the image of the woman about to be stoned for adultery, and Jesus in a most compassionate act saving her. Where was her co-adulterer and where are these new fathers of these aborted babies? They are strangely silent. And are we able to truly understand and forgive a woman who has had an abortion?

There is a new phenomenon in America aptly called the feminization of poverty. Women and children are the new poor in this land and are condemned to misery and degradation in substandard jobs and conditions. Please take a look at that woman pregnant, alone, and facing such a life. I can understand and taste her

(Continued on page 223)

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Staff

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FROM POLAND TO PAWTUCKET

SHOULD THERE be crucifixes on the walls of classrooms in Poland? Should the Supreme Court have allowed Pawtucket to include a Nativity scene in its municipal Christmas display? Should the Senate have rejected a constitutional amendment designed to return organized prayer to America's public schools? We're not sure what the answers might be in some crystal kingdom of unadulterated political philosophy. In this world, however, the right answers are yes, yes, and yes.

Questions of church and state — of which there seem to be an unusual number lately — lend themselves to dogmatism on all sides. Perfectly logical theories effloresce in disregard of messy, contradictory realities. Why crucifixes in Polish classrooms but not organized prayer in American ones? In fact, there's a reasonable answer to that question, one that is implicit in the Supreme Court's decision on Pawtucket (see p. 202). It is, moreover, an answer that is instructive for looking at any number of the religiously charged issues that seem to bedevil our public life.

In theory, church and state are separated in Poland. In practice, the nation labors under an officially enforced orthodoxy. It is a non-religious one, to be sure, and probably one not sincerely espoused even by most of the enforcers; nonetheless it claims the kinds of privileges once attached to established churches. In those circumstances, Polish Catholicism provides a counterweight, and the privileges that *it* retains create a bit of space free of the official orthodoxy. In the abstract, crucifixes on the walls of state classrooms are not a happy solution, and for some in Poland they may possibly represent a nostalgic attachment to an illiberal *ancien régime*. But to give them up in present circumstances would be no contribution to a genuine pluralism.

The constitutional ruling against organized prayer in American public schools, on the other hand, was a belated recognition of exactly that sort of pluralism. A custom that had proved relatively unobjectionable for a nation which was overwhelmingly Protestant had to give way before the reality of twentieth-century Catholic and Jewish immigration and the emergence of a significant segment of principled non-believers. It was also a recognition of the greater role that compulsory schooling had assumed in the socialization of American youth. The proponents of a school prayer amendment did implicit homage to these realities in their insistence that the organized praying they foresaw would be purely voluntary and in no way put the state into the business of composing prayers. Yet no matter how they twisted and turned, they could not offer a persuasive explanation of how these spontaneously generated prayers would actually be orchestrated by teachers and recited by school-children without serious offense to individual conscience. Organized school prayer might go down painlessly — or remain a dead issue — in half or three-quarters of the nation's school districts. In some remaining portion, it would open deep wounds or chafe old scars, until, ignored or enforced, it would only discredit the religious faith

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it was meant to serve.

"Circumstances," wrote Edmund Burke, ". . . give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing color and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind." There are important principles at stake in church-state questions. But they cannot be wielded in the abstract, with no sense of the concrete, historical setting. Which brings us back to Pawtucket and the recent Supreme Court decision. Frankly, commercial Christmas displays complete with stable, oxen, and baby Jesus do not rank among our favorite things. Nor is the Court's reasoning in the Pawtucket case above criticism. Its comparison, for example, between a municipal Christmas crèche and the display of religious paintings in public art museums strikes us as specious. But the merit of the decision overall is its refusal to abstract the crèche case from its concrete circumstances and to take a "rigid, absolutist view" of church-state separation.

In this, the Court has set itself firmly against that view which seems to demand an absolute scouring of all religious references from the public forum. No doubt, Christianity can stand without municipal Christmas crèches; and indeed Christians might better serve their own beliefs and their non-Christian neighbors' sensibilities by taking those life-sized figures off the public payroll and installing them on church property, minus the reindeer, clowns, and six-foot candy canes. Christianity can also do without religious themes on Christmas postage stamps; belief in God can survive without "In God We Trust" on our coins. And if our state and national legislatures have ever been much elevated in their labors by the invocations of the chaplains they have on call, it has escaped our notice. Taken individually, none of these recent targets of the advocates of absolute church-state separation matters so much. Taken as part of a pattern, they begin to be worth defending. Why recognize Christmas as a national holiday at all, instead of the winter solstice? Why recognize Thanksgiving? Why allow Bibles for oath taking? Why pay chaplains in the military, or exempt religious institutions from taxes? Why admit references to God or Providence on ceremonial occasions? To travel down the road of the absolute separationists is eventually to make the specifically religious, among the whole set of intellectual, educational, moral, and spiritual beliefs, practices, and institutions, positively disadvantaged in its public existence.

"That is all right," say the absolute separationists, "Religion is essentially private." But that is not all right. It is not all right because, denied public expression, the strictly "private" will eventually be drained of reality. It is not all right because to exile religion from the public forum, or simply to handicap its role there heavily, is to perform a kind of lobotomy on American culture. Our national past, both in its bright and dark aspects, is thoroughly religious and, yes, largely Christian and, yes, largely Protestant. Will we be able to draw on our heritage, or even understand it, if we diligently forbid all public acknowledgment of it? Even more to the point, most American citizens still construe their ultimate values in religious terms. At what point do they begin believing that the official "rules of the game" are simply disqualifying them from participating in the public discourse about what counts most?

Obviously, that is the way many citizens feel about the constitutional ban on school prayer. No less than eighty percent of the public favor overturning that ban, which thus becomes probably the most popular political cause in sight. The cause is assisted by more than a little political opportunism, but also by the belief of many school prayer supporters, that they are in a position analogous to that of the Polish Catholics: surrendering the schools to "neutrality" is, in fact, only surrendering them to a different — secular — orthodoxy.

That is an exaggeration, and a dangerous one. But it is fed by the similar exaggerations of the absolute separationists. Two specific practices that could calm the exaggerated fears of school prayer supporters are now confronting the exaggerated claims of absolute separationists. One is the matter of "equal access" for secondary students who wish to organize religious groups in public high schools on the same basis as other extracurricular activities like hobby clubs or political groups. The other is the matter of a formal moment of silence in public schools. Both matters are currently at issue in the courts and in legislatures. Absolute separationists like the ACLU are, as always, insisting that both practices contravene the First Amendment.

They are not very persuasive. To argue that the school which allows a Young Democrats club to meet cannot allow the Young Christians to do so because the latter, like the former, requires an adult monitor to satisfy school insurance policies, or because it might actually convert a few students (what are the Young Democrats doing?), is once again to place religion in a special, disfavored status. It is true that proposals for a moment of silence have been made as a "second best" arrangement by, among others, some frustrated backers of organized vocal prayer; but to argue that the idea is an unconstitutional equivalent of school prayer simply because that is what some of its proponents originally favored is illogical. Whether a moment of silence is a covert form of officially endorsed prayer would depend on how it was administered. It is a curious kind of educational philosophy that would end up outlawing *any* school-administered call to personal reflection or meditation on larger purposes.

Line-drawing and a sensitivity to circumstances, of the sort figuring in the Pawtucket decision, would be required in these matters, too. But combine that with the political courage shown by those who voted against the school prayer amendment and the chances are good for genuine pluralism under the First Amendment.

ETC.

• What a useful word is "community." Say you want to comment on tensions between two ethnic groups. Make a generalization about "blacks" or "Jews," and it sounds both

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too specific, as though your observation applied to every single member of the group, and too cold, as though you were referring to nothing more than a statistical conglomerate. But refer, instead, to the "black community" or the "Jewish community," and there you have something at once warmer, more human, and yet savingly vague. No wonder there's the "gay community" and the "academic community." At Academy Award-winning time, we hear a lot about the "motion picture community" (known during the rest of the year as the "film industry"). Then there's the "intelligence community" (spies) and no doubt the "community-organizing community."

We've thought these thoughts many times, particularly during homilies featuring "community" in every sentence. But what really jogged us back to the topic was a letter in the London *Economist*. Replying to an editorial on the Indian government's restriction of tea exports, the letter writer solemnly referred to India's "moral commitment to the international tea community." Ah, the steam arising from our cup of Earl Grey misted over our eyeglasses, and we had a vision of a worldwide tea time. Little old ladies in Malmesbury, an Afghan gun runner in Pakistan, two bookstore clerks in Toronto, a cabdriver in Nairobi, indeed the entire international tea community was steeping and sipping. Now that is the sort of thing to which one could really make a moral commitment. Then we recalled that tea time can't arrive simultaneously all around the globe. All the better, we thought. At any given moment, it's tea time somewhere. The sun never sets on the international tea community.

• Speaking of words, a brief editorial in the February 15 *New York Times* chided the State Department for banishing the word "killing" from its human rights reports. The State Department says "killing" is too imprecise for the sort of thing that Central American death squads do to their victims. Foggy Bottom prefers the usage "unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life."

The *Times* is not buying that. "The State Department concoction," it editorialized, "is particularly repellent. . . . a bloodless abstraction." Quite right.

Elsewhere, the same day's *Times* carried an unusually long and informative report on the problem of late abortions, a problem created by the fact that what was being aborted was the equivalent of "a highly premature infant." In some sixty-five inches of text, there were, of course, numerous references to "abortion," the "abortion process," and the decision "to abort a fetus." There were references to the merits of an abortion procedure that "eliminates any possiblity that a fetus might live"; that "generally results in fetal death"; that, by dismembering the fetus in the womb, "eliminates any possibility of live birth." This latter abortion by dismemberment, admittedly traumatic for those who must witness it, was given its medical label, "dilation and evacuation," or "D and E." Thus one gynecologist says "I do D and E's," although he admits "it is a horrible procedure."

The one word that never appeared in this story was "killing."

Election '84

MEDIA DEMOCRACY

THE HUCKSTERING OF THE PRESIDENCY

JUST TRY to follow the quadrennial presidential horserace: Last year it was Mondale with Cranston moving out of the pack. Cranston fades. It's Glenn; Glenn's moving up. Only he can go the distance. Hart's about to fold. McGovern's a spoiler. No, wait a minute, wait a minute. Glenn is fading back. Jeez, McGovern's a statesman! Is Hollings coming on? Nah, that's only the columnists and Republicans. Here comes Jesse. Jesse's gaining on Fritz; they're coming 'round into the stretch. Wait, wait a minute; it's . . . it's Hart! Hart in the stretch — he's pulling out! *Way* out. It's Hart by a length!

Ever get the feeling the presidential race is like that famous broadcast Dutch Reagan did back in Iowa years ago? You know, the sound went off, and he had to improvise to keep the attention of the listeners, and to stop them from touching that dial?

We got the inevitable two-man race between Mr. Mondale and Mr. Hart — after exactly one primary. I don't know if this is purely because TV covers no sport well with more than two sides, or whether for this particular sport "one-on-one" is simply better video. In any case, the print media has obliged (His Eminence David Cardinal Broder says the Hart-Mondale race is "exciting" and that we will learn "a lot.").

We can, of course, also depend on two — and only two — candidates in the fall. Media democracy is too important to allow false spoilers in the final stretch. Only heretics like Gene McCarthy or John Anderson fail to understand the grave danger of choice in a game so sophisticated and charged with such electric suspense.

I'm sorry about that. I don't like either major party. The Republicans frighten me most, but the Democrats offend more. I don't expect much of Republicans. They are *supposed* to be corporate apologists and militarists. But the Democrats do poorly on either score, too; the debt, when examined structurally, is as much or more their heritage as Reagan's. The Republicans may be, by turns, stupid and cold-hearted, but the Democrats are the biggest phonies since Clifford Irving. All that hand wringing about the poor and the downtrodden, all that talk about compassion — when the party establishment is controlled by corporate lawyers, lobbyists, brokers, and real estate developers. And all those D.C. superlawyers, the Clark Cliffords and Harry McPhersons, and who-have-you's, gathering in elegant dining rooms and discussing nostalgically the Great Society's war on poverty.

Walter (Fritz) Mondale, the quintessential veep, is now one of them, a "Washington lawyer." Mondale is also a faction Bionic: pieces have been gathered from nearly every pressure

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group headquarters along K Street or Connecticut Ave. in Washington, D.C.

I don't know whether Gary Hart has new ideas or not, and I don't know if his ideas are any good. (I'd settle for old tried and true "ideas.") But I do know he is not currently running on ideas; he is running on the symbolism of ideas.

We have gone from the passions and the interests to the media and the lobbyists. The Democratic choice is between two kinds of selling of the presidency: old-fashioned retail huckstering à la Humphrey. And mass marketing à la Kennedy.

Which brings us back to the media.

Political parties are dead. The smoke-filled room of a Mayor Daley is gone forever. Though some journalists and political scientists dream of resurrection, I think they are sentimental and mistaken. As a nation, we were never much on political parties. This means a new elite must filter out candidates and issues. In democracy, an elite is inevitable. The new one is unquestionably the press — with broadcast media dominating. They set the agenda, pinpoint crises, determine the standards for deciding which candidates and what issues may be dubbed "real." Nixon was the first (in 1968) to clearly enunciate post-party politics as an appendage to advertising. John Kennedy (in 1960) was the first to sense and exploit it. Mr. Hart, whatever the merits of his platform, has understood the new game and the new elite, and played them as Carter and Reagan did.

There is nothing inherently wrong with elites. But there *is* something wrong with unaccountable ones. As corporations the networks pursue money and power as voraciously as other conglomerates and monopolies do. Their reporters, playing the role of kingmakers, mostly pursue sarcasm and success. Truth is left to Bill Moyers, who is occasionally banished to P.B.S.

"Number One" — that ought to be the key buzzword for the reigning sportscasters in the news booths. That alone is their primary interest: being Number One. The Number One news organization. Number One in ratings. Number One network. Their second interest — a distant second — is in the *candidate* who "emerges" as Number One.

I do not know an easy way out. Certainly declarations of the outcome of elections before they are fact, i.e. held, is absolutely without justification and an assault upon the franchise. Congress is obliged to show a small morsel of courage here, and prohibit the pre-vote projection. What is at stake is not freedom of expression or investigation, but full reign of greed as against the modest amount of power still retained in this country by ordinary citizens.

Beyond this, we cannot and should not expect restraint upon the political power of the press. American political tradition never — from James Madison to Teddy Roosevelt — expected the powerful to restrain themselves. The networks will not stop selling time to candidates (except third and fourth party ones). They will not stop commentating. But we ought to be able to demand less verbal and analytic nonsense and more respect for voters, if not for "truth."

MY OWN FAVORITE Democrats this year were McGovern and Hollings. I doubt I agree with more than 50 percent of what McGovern says, or more than 30 percent of what Hollings advocated. But, like Goldwater, one senses that both are real persons — of flesh and blood, conviction, prejudice, pride, and even (imagine!) political experience. Watching Hollings withdraw the other day, I had a sense of an unprogrammed and honorable man. Rather like old Sam Ervin, Hollings seemed to have *character*, and though much dedication to what he regards as the good work of politics, some kind of reserve — an inner life as well. Hollings said he will stay in the Senate which is where independent and competent men of his stature should be, and where not enough are! Perhaps his message of sacrifice will get a better hearing there now, or in the next session. Perhaps the Democrats will one day elect him floor leader.

Aside from ideals and ideas — genuine, personal, old, or new — the real test of a presidential candidate may be wit, which McGovern and Hollings in this campaign seemed to have, and which all the interesting losers of the last thirty years (Goldwater, McCarthy, Stevenson) seemed to possess. I personally prefer the current two Democratic frontrunners to President Reagan because as governors either would, I believe, do less harm. Yet, one imagines Hart or Mondale on the morning after an electoral defeat waking to ask, "Where's the rest of me?"

KEITH C. BURRIS

(Keith C. Burris teaches political science at Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania.)

Democratic primaries

RUNNING ON NEW
IS REDEFINING PROBLEMS ENOUGH?

THE ARGUMENT, I predict, will degenerate very quickly. It will end with an article in which some enterprising reporter will list all two hundred-odd proposals that Gary Hart has made over the last four years, and then — based on God-knows what criteria — put check marks next to the ones that constitute authentic "new ideas." For a political press that has often been criticized for ignoring issues, that would be a praiseworthy attempt — but it approaches the subject in the wrong way. Hart does talk a lot about new ideas, but he also speaks of "moving forward," "leadership," and "a vision of the future." Beyond specific policy proposals, there is, I think, a larger conception of government and politics that informs and explains Hart's rhetoric and his behavior as a public official. And for purposes of figuring out what kind of a president Hart might be — which is, after all, the bottom line — that larger philosphy is a good deal more revealing than a narrow debate about who said what first.

Though Hart likes to associate himself with John F. Ken-

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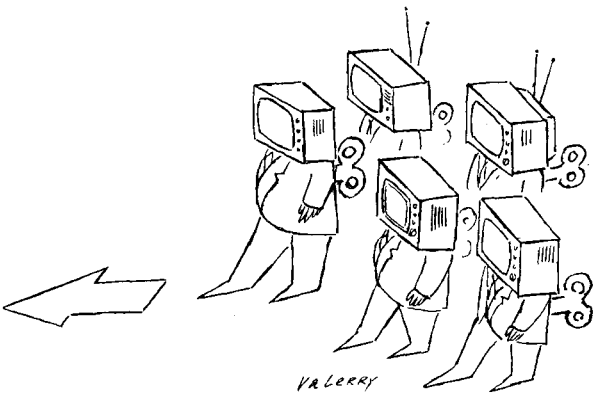

nedy and the events and spirit of the 1960s, the formative experience in his evolution as a public official is not the New Frontier but the landslide defeat of George McGovern, in 1972. For the Democratic party's established liberal leadership — McGovern, Ted Kennedy, and Hubert Humphrey — Nixon's victory was a great disappointment, but not a reason to reassess their entire political ideology. For Gary Hart, and the whole new generation of Democratic politicians who first ran for public office in the mid-1970s, the message sent by the 1972 election was stronger and clearer. The old liberalism was dead. The American people wouldn't buy it anymore. And since, as relative newcomers to politics, they weren't on record as having created, supported, or voted for the programs of the old liberalism, they possessed a freedom denied to McGovern and Kennedy: to reshape their images, rhetoric, and political philosophies in a way more in tune with these "new realities." In Hart's case, the about-face was particularly abrupt. As early as 1973, in his memoirs of the McGovern campaign, Hart was already proclaiming that "American liberalism was near bankruptcy." In 1974, when he first ran for the U.S. Senate, his stock speech was entitled "The End of the New Deal."

In revising the liberal vision, Hart started by trying to draw a distinction between the values or principles of liberalism, and its methods or policy instruments. The values — equality of rights and equality of opportunity — must be kept, but the methods should be rethought. In the 1950s and 1960s, liberals had decided that, in order to achieve their goals, they needed large government agencies and an extensive regulatory apparatus. This decision might have been defensible in the context of the 1950s, but it no longer suits the economic realities. Today, Hart says, "we must figure out new methods and new ways of achieving those objectives with a reduction in programs, less bureaucracy, and fewer regulations."

This general approach seems to make the most sense when applied to the field of economic regulation. A good case *can* be made that liberals in the 1950s and '60s were insufficiently aware of the complex problems posed by large regulatory agencies, and perhaps too quick to reject market mechanisms as a way of allocating goods or imposing costs. Economists have been arguing for years that the best way to control pollution, for example, is through the use of effluent fees (sometimes called pollution taxes); yet the idea has never been given a fair trial. (Of course, one should also note in passing that the reaction against regulation is far less of a new idea or a generational phenomenon than the "neoliberals" would have us believe. One of the first major politicians to call for extensive deregulation, after all, was that nasty old-line liberal Ted Kennedy.)

But as one moves beyond the area of regulation, Hart's call for new methods to achieve old values begins to look a lot more like a conjurer's trick: a feat of image manipulation that might work for one election but leaves the real policy problems unsolved. The difficulty of separating liberal goals from liberal methods is best seen in one of the issues that Hart doesn't talk about: poverty. In his standard campaign speech, Hart calls for "a compassionate government without . . . outmoded policies of big spending." But if he has any real ideas about how to do this, he hasn't made them public. (The sole exception in his speech is a plan to weatherize low-income houses.)

As for his recent book, *A New Democracy* (William Morrow, $12.95, 180 pp.), the poor are almost invisible in it. The thrust of his economic proposals is to restore economic growth and make the United States more competitive internationally; the notion that special steps must be taken to ensure that the fruits of growth redound to the benefit of *all* Americans seems never to have occurred to him. The subjects of welfare, day care, food stamps, legal services, and substandard housing are never mentioned in his book. Health care and nutrition are dismissed in one sentence: they must be ensured for every American *child* (adults are presumably not covered), but there's no indication about how this is to be accomplished. The closest Hart comes in this direction are his proposals to secure full employment. Even here, however, the emphasis is on the problems of the established working- and middle-classes. In education, for example, he offers detailed proposals for improving the quality of technical and scientific learning, but offers only rhetorical support for improvements in more basic skills.

Turning from general rhetoric to specific programs, it becomes obvious why Hart faces this problem. Common sense — as well as history — tells us that one cannot eliminate poverty without spending money. And if there's a way to deliver services to a large, dependent population without creating a bureaucracy, well, that hasn't been discovered yet, either.

None of which is to suggest that Gary Hart is a closet Reaganite. He consistently voted against all of the Reagan budget cuts and has introduced legislation to restore many of them. My real point is to call into question the extent to which one really can make a clean, neat separation between liberal goals and liberal methods. Hart and the neoliberals aren't the first to try: this distinction was the very cornerstone of moderate Republicanism during the first two decades after World War II. We are not opposed to the *goals* of the New Deal, Dewey and Eisenhower and Nixon (in 1960) all insisted. We just think there are better methods of achieving them. Maybe there are, but Ike and Nixon never produced them — and neither, I think, will Gary Hart.

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THE GOALS-METHODS distinction is not Hart's only vehicle for modernizing the liberal vision. A second major theme that undergirds his policies is the attempt to reformulate basic political controversies — a search for what he calls "third positions." In too many policy arenas, he has argued, liberals and conservatives begin by asking the wrong questions, and then engage in a furious squabble over largely irrelevant answers. New ideas are needed, not just to provide liberals with a new stock of weapons for the old shouting matches, but as a way of fundamentally reshaping the entire public dialogue. As he puts it in his book, "Too many of our leaders try to force today's problems into the framework of yesterday's world. Much of our public debate is based on false choices, which ensure wrong answers."

The military reform issue is perhaps the best example of Hart's attempts to articulate a third position. When he first came to the Senate in 1975, he says, the debate over the military budget had ground down into a stalemate between two polar positions: conservatives said spend more, liberals said spend less. But after considerable study, Hart felt that a more important issue was being ignored: namely, that the military was spending the money it did have for all the wrong things. American military planning was too often based on a strategic picture taken from the 1940s. Our conventional forces were designed to fight a war of attrition — a reasonable strategy against Germany and Japan, but entirely inappropriate against the Soviets and Chinese. Our naval procurement policies emphasized large aircraft carriers, whereas what we really needed were smaller but more numerous vessels. Military promotion policies favored bureaucrats over military strategists. In short, the entire way in which the military went about defining and implementing its mission needed to be reformed.

Hart thus tried to recast the entire liberal-conservative debate on the military by formulating a third position that seemed to defy easy categorization. Liberals noted approvingly that Hart was opposed to some of the largest and most expensive new weapons proposals. But to the conservatives, he could truthfully say that he wasn't soft on defense — indeed, that in certain areas of the budget, he would ask for more money than President Reagan would. Why, even the *National Review* had conceded that Hart "has been doing some of the best thinking around on military aspects of national survival."

Is Hart's search for third positions the solution, then, to the current liberal predicament? Well, sort of. For the more one scrutinizes Hart's military reform proposals, the less clear it becomes how much he has really accomplished. If the conservatives are now saying nice things about him, it is largely because he has conceded every one of their premises. At no point in his many policy statements on military reform does Hart ever raise the subject of the appropriate uses and limits of military force. On this vital issue, his stance sounds perilously close to Ronald Reagan's. The chapter on military reform in his book, for example, includes a call for "obvious and indisputable American naval superiority" as a way of limiting "Soviet military and diplomatic options in dealing with third-world nations." Not surprisingly, if Hart concedes that much to the conservative side, he can make only marginal cuts in the huge Reagan defense budget. And even these cuts come about almost by accident: it just so happens that the smaller but more numerous naval vessels that Hart wants are cheaper than the larger ones desired by President Reagan.

To put the matter in another way, there are (at least) two separate questions that can be raised about the U.S. defense budget: how much we should spend and what we should spend it on. Hart is probably correct in maintaining that the continual preoccupation with the first question has caused us to ignore the second one. But he commits precisely the same error if he asserts, as he seems to, that by concentrating on the second question he can make the first disappear.

Hart's effort to formulate a third position on the military budget, then, yields equivocal results; but equivocal or not, the "third position" has become a Hart trademark. It is an approach he consciously tries to apply to almost every issue: the economy, energy, the environment.

Indeed, a strong case could be made that Hart overuses the approach. The net effect of watching Hart label a whole series of traditional debates as "false choices" is to raise some serious questions about his own political vision. Political conflict, he seems to be saying, is largely illusory. It results only because established political leadership phrases the policy choices in the wrong way. Which, stated as a general proposition, is hardly very persuasive. Granted that *some* political conflicts *are* unproductive, and granted that the focus on some issues (like the size of the defense budget) causes other issues to be ignored (such as proper defense strategy), nevertheless the conflicts between fundamental philosophies and values are, ultimately, unavoidable. Guns versus butter, freedom versus equality, size of government versus extent of services — these issues haven't divided democratic societies for the last one hundred years solely because politicians are too dumb to see the debate in other terms. The issues persist because the conflicts are real, and no amount of recasting or "third positioning" will ever eliminate them.

IN SPEAKING of Hart's persistent attempts to formulate a third position, we touch upon yet another important characteristic of his thinking: his constant, unremitting, almost obsessive search for the new. It is in this sense, principally, that he truly is a candidate of new ideas. Even if the final results sometimes aren't new, the style and the vision are. Where other candidates operate within an existing framework and cautiously probe the boundaries of established policy, Hart has always made a conscious effort to seek out new alternatives and new perspectives. As he once told a reporter, "I'm interested in major overhauls of government, not so much in taking a screwdriver to the engine." In this respect, he has clearly proven to be a valuable member of both the Senate and the Democratic party. In the military reform debate, Hart sought out the unconventional views of James Boyd. In economic policy, he reached out to such innovative thinkers as Robert Reich long before they had been recognized by other Democratic leaders.

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Hart's penchant for the new also permeates his conception of leadership. To Hart, leadership is almost entirely limited to intellectual and policy concerns. A leader is one who searches out new ideas, who is the first on the block to call for some new initiative. It's the person, he said in one interview, "out front, taking the lead, framing the issues." On the other hand, there is no evidence, in either his writings or his career, that Hart thinks or engages much in legislative strategizing or careful coalition building. "He'll have thought out an idea, he'll know an idea, he'll present the idea," Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming has said him. "But then if it doesn't fall on fertile ground, he'll wonder how come you can't convince people to go along." John Lindsay was a leader in the Hart framework, but Dick Daley would not have been.

But this is only one side of Hart's political temperament. For when it comes to results — the actual policies offered — the "newness" and the vision are much less apparent, if they exist at all. As Hart pursues some of his new ideas, they often encounter the same problems and political obstacles that have bedeviled more traditional approaches. So he begins to compromise and soften them a little, and pretty soon he winds up with a set of proposals — his energy program is a good example — that aren't all that different from what every other Democrat is proposing. He has absorbed the perspectives and criticisms of such thinkers as Reich and Lester Thurow, but he is unwilling to embrace the kinds of comprehensive solutions that these men call for. Hart, in short, is an intellectual visionary hiding inside a pragmatic, often cautious politician. He thinks great thoughts but does not do great deeds.

The evolution of Hart's views on economic policy are a particularly good illustration of this. In the late 1970s, Hart, like many other Democrats, began to feel that a new approach was needed to deal with America's persistently high levels of inflation and unemployment. After talking to John Naisbitt, among others, Hart latched onto high technology as the solution to an information society, and America's economy would have to adjust accordingly. "The future of our country is unquestionably in intelligence, communications, software, an information society," he told a reporter in 1981. Meanwhile, he had opposed the Chrysler bail-out, and had criticized both Democrats and Republicans for "debating whether to bail out Chrysler . . . when in effect we ought to be acknowledging this tremendous grassroots, bottom-up surge of new technology and high technology industries."

But then the late returns came in, and Hart had some second thoughts on the issue. Technological advances notwithstanding, it became increasingly doubtful that high technology by itself could ever employ more than a small fraction of America's non-agricultural work force. Moreover, workers in traditional industries weren't particularly pleased to hear that they were washed up.

As a result, by the time he wrote his book in 1983, Hart was taking a very different line. Now he characterized the debate about "whether to revive traditional industries or to encourage new industries" — a debate which he had helped to initiate — as outmoded; we needed "both to rebuild the old and build the new." And how would he go about rebuilding the old?" "We need a process, initiated by the president, to create long-term agreements by management, labor, financial markets, and government designed to help our major industries become more competitive." Not necessarily a bad idea — but this is precisely what the Chrysler bail-out was, and he had opposed it.

As this narrative also suggests, there is a faddish, experimental quality to much of Hart's thinking that may be entirely appropriate for a gadfly senator, but is ill-suited to the responsibilities of a president. Too often he seems to seize on some proposal simply because it's new; only later does he begin to sort out its real merits and deficiencies. New ideas are, by definition, untried; and the history of policy innovation in this country contains a long list of new ideas which promised to solve a problem but actually made it worse. This suggests that a genuinely new idea deserves much closer and more critical scrutiny than an incremental change in an old one. But Hart, like many of the neoliberals, is desperately short of historical vision; such lessons are lost on him.

An Irish friend of mine, on first hearing of Hart's call for new ideas, commented, "How typically American!" And there is, indeed, something distinctively American about a campaign whose principal boast is that its proposals are *new* — and seems to relegate to secondary status the question of whether they're any good or not. Many Democrats were very impressed by the massive victory of Ronald Reagan, 1980's candidate of new ideas, and so drew the conclusion that a similar renewal movement was needed within their own party. But they don't seem to have noticed a second and equally important lesson of the last few years: that Reagan's new ideas — particularly supply-side economics — were a disaster in practice.

WILLIAM G. MAYER

(William G. Mayer is a graduate student in government at Harvard, concentrating on contemporary liberal thought, and a free-lance writer on politics.)

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Church & state

CRÈCHE LANDING

A MELLOWING OF THE COURT

THE SUPREME COURT has finally handed down its decision in the Pawtucket crèche case, in what will hopefully be the end of years of considerable controversy. The American Civil Liberties Union, you remember, joined by the National Council of Churches, had sued the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, claiming that its Christmas display discriminated against non-Christians and violated the First Amendment's strictures mandating separation of church and state. In a 5-4 ruling, the justices upheld Pawtucket's practice of exhibiting a crèche, nestled in with, among other things, "a Santa Claus house, reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh, candy-striped poles, a Christmas tree, carolers, cut-out figures representing such characters as a clown, an elephant, a teddy bear, hundreds of colored lights, and a banner proclaiming 'Season's Greetings.' "

It is important to note that the Court ruled only on the narrow facts of the Pawtucket display. It did *not* decide whether, for example, a crèche or Easter cross standing alone in the midst of the village green would be constitutional. In reversing lower court decisions banning the Pawtucket scene, however, Chief Justice Burger pointed out that the concept of an absolute "wall" between church and state, advocated by some zealots, while "a useful figure of speech probably deriving from the views of Thomas Jefferson," was no longer apropos in twentieth century America, where no institution in our society exists in a vacuum or in isolation from any other part. Indeed, the particular Pawtucket display symbolizes the intermingling of sacred and secular, the infant Jesus with Santa Claus, that has traditionally grown up around Christmas through the years.

The Pawtucket decision, like a number of those handed down in recent years, represents a mellowing, a maturing judicial judgment. No longer, fortunately, in this writer's view, is decision-making absolutist and rigidly categorical. Old wine is best, and there is a new constitutional respect for the old traditions, such as the opening of the sessions of many state legislatures with prayer, or the use of public funds to support a chaplain for the United States Congress. One of the criteria for striking down practices which raise First Amendment inquiry is whether they involve an unnecessary entanglement between church and state. Thus, the Chief Justice wrote, "to conclude that the primary effect" of the Pawtucket display was "to advance religion in violation of the Establishment Clause would require that we view it more beneficial and more an endorsement of religion, for example, than expenditure of large sums of public money for textbooks supplied throughout the country to students attending church-sponsored schools, expenditure of public funds for transportation of students to church-sponsored schools, and the tax exemptions for church properties," practices already sanctioned by the Supreme Court in 1947, 1968, and 1970.

One of the nicest things about the field of constitutional law is that it is never, and never can be, static. A practice that might have been anathema in the eighteenth century might be more than welcome in the more modern conditions of the twentieth. Justices are appointed to exercise *judgment*, not to mechanically apply formulas to changing conditions. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Pawtucket crèche case. Whereas once the slightest intrusion of religion might have raised a persecuted outcry, now we can comfortably stroll along the corridors of the National Gallery of Art, an institution amply supported by public funds, looking at all fifty-seven varieties of Madonna and Child and pass a pleasant uncontroversial Sunday afternoon.

It may be curious that the dissent in the Pawtucket crèche case was written by Justice William Brennan, the only Catholic member of the Court. Or not so curious. For if he were to enthusiastically approve the crèche, it might appear that he were unduly favoring his own religion. Rather than taking a take-it-or-leave-it attitude towards the crèche or viewing it, as Chief Justice Burger and the majority of the justices did, as merely engendering (along with a hearty noggin of good rum punch) "a friendly community spirit of good will in keeping with the season," Justice Brennan felt the scene was "best understood as a mystical re-creation of an event that lies at the heart of the Christian faith." As such, it constituted the most emphatic pronouncement of the Good News.

To me, this is taking the matter far too seriously. Dudley Clendinin of the *New York Times*, who was sent to Pawtucket to survey the damage the day the Supreme Court opinion was announced, noted that the chief minority group likely to be offended, our Jewish brethren, did not join in the suit to ban the crèche. As George Frazier, a plaintiff in the suit and A.C.L.U. member recalled, after giving a talk to a B'nai B'rith group in Pawtucket, "Some of them said; 'It's been there so long, why did you ever bring it up?"

Which reminds me of the seven-year-old second grader who ran home one day after school, slightly terrified, and asked his mother: "Who is this good Mrs. Murphy who will always be chasing me?" Perplexed, his mother phoned the home room teacher. "Oh!" remarked the teacher. "He must be referring to the Twenty-third Psalm which we recite each day: 'Surely, Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.' " Let it be, let it be. . . . A mellow decision and one to be commended.

MAURICE deG. FORD

(Maurice deG. Ford, a Boston lawyer, teaches law and psychiatry at Harvard University.)

COMING: Frank Zepezauer on school standards and the sex education syndrome.

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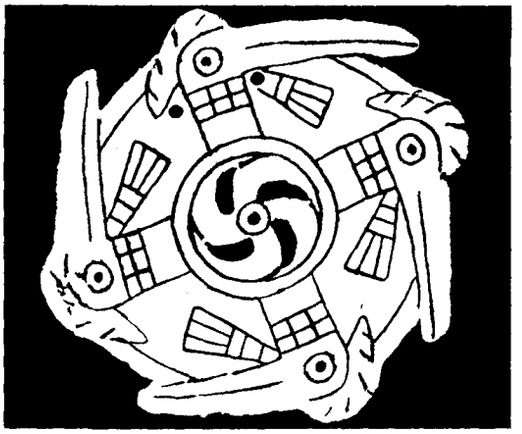
THE ROUNDHOUSE AT THE MIDDLE OF THE EARTH



American Indian spiritual politics

CHRISTOPHER VECSEY

IN THE HEART of the American heartland of Oklahoma, alongside a hardscrabble Okfuskee County dirt road, lie Phillip Deere's 160 acres. From his mailbox with its adjacent sign, "Roundhouse: COKOPOLOKSE," you look out under a dusty blue summer sky at grasslands and scattered woods, the receding hairline of the Eastern Woodlands at the rim of the Great Plains. Scissortails swoop from the telephone lines, across stands of box elder, pecan, and persimmon trees, past small rigs pumping oil from the fields where herds of cattle grind their grassy meals. Jackrabbits and tortoises move to their respective paces in the low brush, and deer can be seen grazing at muddy creeks. Armadillos are more apparent as road-kills than as living presences.

The cars and trucks travel the local roads to Henryetta, to Okmulgee ("Big Enough to Serve You, Small Enough to Care"), or beyond, to Tulsa in the north or Oklahoma City to the west. Okemah, the nearest town to Phillip Deere's place, is too small and poor to get nationally advertised fast food joints. The one restaurant in town is called, simply, "Restaurant." The Okemah pentecostal church is a squat, windowless, cinderblock box.

In the middle of Phillip Deere's 160 acres, in the middle of America, is his roundhouse, made of logs, planks, and shingles. Fourscore feet in diameter, open to the east, with a ceremonial fire lifting its grey breath from the dirt floor through the central smoke hole in the roof, the roundhouse is the focus of the land that immediately surrounds it. Before Mr. Deere built his stone-fronted home, he built his roundhouse, and he built his roundhouse around his fire. For him, and for the several hundred people who are with him this summer day, the fire is central not only to the roundhouse and to Mr. Deere's land, but to America, and beyond. At this moment it is the ritual middle of the earth.

CHRISTOPHER VECSEY *teaches American Indian religion at Colgate University. His books include* American Indian Environments *and* Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes.

Around the central fire a gathering of American Indians representing dozens of tribes from North, Central, and South America is enacting the ceremony of the pipe. They have taken four pipes from beaded drawstring sacks. Now everyone stands as the pipes make the round in a sunwise direction, each person smoking the pipes in his or her own ritual manner. Prayers can be heard, along with the crackling of the sage in the fire and the fluttering of a swallow nesting in the roundhouse roof.

A Sioux named William Means explains to the congregation the symbolism of the pipe. Its bowl, made from catlinite, a red stone mined in Pipestone, Minnesota, represents "the earth from which we come and upon whom we depend." Indians have been mining Pipestone catlinite for a thousand years or more. The stem is wood, and it represents the generations of people who have grown and lived on the earth. The bowl and stem go together; they fit in harmony as one pipe, united as should be humans and the earth. Dangling from the stem is an eagle plume, representing steadfastness, clarity, and fidelity, because the eagle flies the highest, sees the farthest, and takes one mate for a lifetime. The smoke from the pipe represents prayers to the spiritual forces that promote all existence. The whole pipe represents the life, Means explains, of the Indian people. As long as they continue to pass the pipe and smoke its contents, they will hold onto their way of life.

IN THE LAST decade Indians have come back to their pipes, as well as to their sweat lodges, sun dances, and vision quests. This summer day in 1983 these Indians have congregated in Phillip Deere's roundhouse to complete two meetings: the Youths and Elders Conference (June 8-11) and the International Indian Treaty Council (June 12-15), both of which — they hope — will help restore to them their identity as autonomous peoples, an autonomy that appears to rest on a foundation of spirituality expressed as palpable kinship with fellow humans (both living and dead), the non-human environment, and the great mysterious sources of existence.

Their host is an Indian in his mid-fifties. With his mother and his children he tends his land: planting crops, raising a few

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head of cattle, fishing in his pond. To supplement his local subsistence, and to help support meetings like the ones he has just hosted, Mr. Deere travels widely in the United States and Europe, lecturing to diverse groups about Indian religion and politics — which are to him thoroughly intertwined. He is also the spiritual advisor to the political American Indian Movement (AIM), whose leadership helped establish the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). Little known by the non-Indian media and virtually unknown in white America, this man embodies the joining of traditional Indian spirituality and active Indian politics, and his words find respect among Indians wherever he goes.

Phillip Deere is a Muskogee, or Creek Indian — the Muskogees being the principal tribe in the Creek Confederacy of Alabama that in the eighteenth century was the major political and military power in the American Southeast. In the early nineteenth century, factions of Creeks resisted mightily and even fanatically — calling for supernatural powers, for example, in the Red Stick War of 1813-14, to defend them against a white invasion that was destroying their people, their land, and their traditions. Despite their resistance and their famed abilities at forging alliances with other Indian nations, they suffered forced removal to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) with the other four "Civilized Tribes" in the infamous "Trail of Tears" of the 1830s and 1840s. Even after removal, however, the Creeks continued their confederating ways, frequently serving as advisors to Indian nations of the West in their struggle against white encroachment and domination. The Creeks established a capital at Okmulgee and persisted in their sovereignty until the United States squashed it by fiat and force at the turn of the twentieth century.

Some Creeks refused to give up, Phillip Deere's Muskogee relatives among them. His mother held onto the 160 acres allotted to her family when the U.S. broke up the Creek tribal lands, refusing to sign any agreement with the newly established state of Oklahoma or the feds. Her land, predating as it does the state and national jurisdictions, is untaxed. From her land and the autonomy the land affords, come her son's spirituality and his sovereignty. His mother's family were followers of Crazy Snake (Chitto Harjo), the Muskogee who — beginning in 1892 and lasting almost twenty years — led the opposition to U.S. aggression toward Creek nationhood. Government troops defeated his movement, but his spirit and the spirit of the old Creek Confederacy live on in Phillip Deere, who has two photographs of the Muskogee patriot hanging in his house. Mr. Deere says that his people have always been the resisters. They were the last to give up in the Red Stick War; they opposed the destruction of the tribe and individual allotments of land; they hid Crazy Snake during his resistance. Consciously and actively, Mr. Deere carries on the work of his militant forebears.

IN 1979 PHILLIP Deere held his first Youths and Elders Conference at his roundhouse. He had already been associated with AIM for close to a decade, yet, "We got so involved with big things — committees, treaties, governments — that we forgot about the children and the little stories that we have to tell them." He perceived a need on the part of Indian youths to sit at the feet of Indian elders from all tribes and listen to their wisdom. Mr. Deere saw gaps developing among the various segments of the Indian population: between the young and old, the radical and the traditional, and between one tribe and another. He designed his Youths and Elders Conference to heal those fissures.

There was a need for youths to listen and for elders to speak. Mr. Deere loves to tell about Indian elders who can talk and talk until white reporters run out of tape for their recorders, men who defeat machines with their capacity for speech. These are men made of words — stories about old ways, advice about new problems, and Mr. Deere arranged his conference for them as much as for the youths, fulfilling the elders' need to speak. To be an elder is to have an audience, a community of respect with a desire to learn and remember, to pass on tradition.

In planning his annual conference, Mr. Deere was reaching beyond his AIM activities, but he was also concerned about those radical Indians who remind him of Crazy Snake. He says that when AIM began in 1968, it had no spiritual base. But after a few years the people in the movement saw that they could not have a political movement without knowing what their ultimate goals were. "The popular view of AIM," he notes, "is that they're radicals, troublemakers, bombers, but that isn't so. They are searching for their spiritual center and they have turned to the elders for direction." These politicized Indians — many of whom are now in their middle age — felt left out of the traditional ways, many of them having grown up in the cities, and they were looking for values to guide them. Elders, on the other hand, felt neglected by the militants who were demonstrating and going their own way without consulting the tribal authorities, the elders themselves. Mr. Deere decided to hold his conference every year for militants and traditionalists together, so no one would feel excluded.

Mr. Deere looked around at his own people. At Okmulgee, the Creek National capitol — with its modern buildings, its air-conditioned, concrete offices, its Coke machines and advertisements for Bible schools, its men in polyester pants and shiny black shoes, amidst the highways and factory outlet stores — has an agenda that does not include the keeping of Muskogee spiritual traditions or the militant reclaiming of ancient autonomy. A young Muskogee complains that the tribal chairman's idea of ritual is the annual softball tournament, and no one from the Creek Nation government comes to Phillip Deere's roundhouse, even though he is the speaker for the Muskogee traditionalists and perhaps the most respected Muskogee medicine man. Even some of Mr. Deere's relatives are what his son calls "real Christians" who worship at the Nuyaka Indian Baptist Church two miles north of Mr. Deere's place, and who will not come to meetings at the "pagan" roundhouse. Seeing the disharmony within his own family, and perceiving similar factionalism between "progressives" and "traditionalists" among other Indian nations, Mr. Deere hopes to forge a new family of Indians out of disparate tribal

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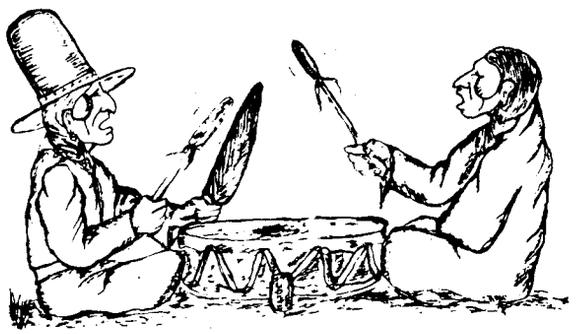
groups, a pan-Indian consciousness that would incorporate and also transcend particular tribal traditions and loyalties. His Youths and Elders Conference, then, was meant to join young and old, radical and traditional, and various tribal backgrounds into one grand confederacy.

Mr. Deere was not trying to nullify regional tribal ways. He says that there are medicine people and elders all across North America; they exist and function but you hear nothing about them. You never will because they stay with their people and never leave them. They don't travel around the country. Many of them do not even speak English. They serve their local communities, as they should. But Mr. Deere is different. He says that he regards the people at his conference as well as members of AIM and IITC as "all one family." Among the Muskogees he is a spiritual leader, and he says that he knows most of the Muskogees in his state, but he feels the need to reach beyond his own tribe to all Indian people.

Attending his conference are a few hundred Indians, Chicanos, and non-Indians. One of the elders, a Hopi named Tom Banyacya, has been traveling around the States since 1948 on the behalf of Hopi traditionalists who want him to express their points of view to other Indians and to whites. The Indian audience includes a Shawnee-Delaware from Tulsa who wants "to learn something about my people;" a North Carolina Cherokee who comes every year "to remember what it's like when I go back into society out there;" a Seneca from New York, hoping to find a cure for the paralysis in his legs; Shoshonis from Nevada, Comanches from Texas, local Creeks, Cherokees, and Seminoles; a contingent of Ojibwa children from the Heart of the Earth Survival School in the Twin Cities, Minnesota; activists from Oakland ("spirituality is possible in the cities, with a sweat lodge in the backyard"); representatives of the Northwest Indian Women's Circle from British Columbia; an elderly Yakima couple from Washington; a Canadian Mohawk sporting a button, "Born Again Pagan." They come with their families and their friends, in vans loaded with camping equipment which they set up all around Mr. Deere's acreage: tipis and ripstop nylon foldups, old army surplus tents and sleeper vans. The atmosphere turns festive. Children play duck-duck-goose and swim in the pond. Elders deliver speeches while slipping their grandchildren candy from their pockets. Youngsters provide ladles of water for speakers and listeners alike. At night the youths joke and sing as they settle into sleep. The ambience is that of a great summer family reunion, a campout on a friendly uncle's lawn, a gathering of the clans, as a context for the words being spoken in the roundhouse.



At the front gate a group of men and women serve as security. Their advisory: "No drugs, no alcohol, no weapons, and no arguing." If the participants are members of a family — and they seem to regard themselves at least as cousins — they will not openly criticize their kin. An observer might find the resulting mood somewhat uncritical toward the speeches (one hears romantic notions like, "We never had any problems until white men arrived here," but nobody challenges them); however, if knowledge consists of some criticism and some appreciation, these Indians have determined that in the family circle appreciation must override critique. Consensus is the goal, and unanimity is requested and received on every issue. Spiritual gatherings like Mr. Deere's were held last summer on the Duck Valley Shoshoni Reservation in Nevada and in Tacoma, Washington; the overall effect is to produce an environment of Indian spiritual commonality (some critics call it mystical mush), where Indians from many backgrounds try to remember the most important common knowledge of Indian spirituality: the moral lessons of relationship with fellow humans, animals, plants, the earth, and the universe as a whole.

This pan-Indianism has deep roots and is embedded in an Indian spirituality that aims to see and maintain relations amongst all beings. Moreover, the breaking of tribal insularity over the centuries, especially in the last hundred years when tribal networks have fractured, has encouraged Indians to build new continent-wide associations where, as an Indian elder named Coyote notes, "You can go anywhere on the continent and somebody knows you, somebody welcomes you."

THE CEMENT OF commonality is a sense of common oppression. Whites have brought Indians together doubly. They created institutions, like boarding schools, prisons, and Indian Territory, where Indians from various tribes have met. Secondly, in the view of Indians, they continue to oppress all these people and create for Indians an easily recognized "us/them" distinction. A young Creek woman from Atlanta at the conference bemoans her boarding school upbringing, her flirtation with Baptist and Mormon churches, and her subscription to the Dale Carnegie course of study. Almost in tears, she confesses these wanderings from the Indian road, and reaffirms her Indianness by recalling her late grandmother's advice: "Don't try to be what you are not." The young woman speaks emphatically, "I'm *not* white! I'm *not* Christian! I'm an Indian and I have to live like one!" Tom Banyacya has been circulating a Hopi prophecy scroll for over three decades now, featuring pictographic narratives with the message that Indians and whites have separate roads to walk, separate ways of life to lead. Indians should respect the white man's road (despite the dangers it brings to Indians and to the earth herself), but they should walk the Indian road as Indians.

There are some whites at the Youth and Elders Conference. Mr. Deere prohibited them from attending until two years ago, and other spiritual conferences bar all whites except for those

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married to Indians. Mr. Deere explains that Indian elders do not like to come if they think they will find a "hippie camp." Moreover, whites disrupt the proceedings by asking too many questions, by arguing, by showing off their knowledge, and simply by being there. Mr. Deere says, "The white man will never understand the spiritual ways of the Indians," and he explains the Indian reticence to speak freely in front of whites. Indians have faced white racism; they are tired of everpresent surveillance by troops of anthropologists, government employees, and tourists; so, they come to his place for refuge. They do not feel comfortable about whites; neither does he. "I admit it, I never feel right. I can never speak honestly. I feel I can't." During the last decade when he has seen whites helping Indian causes, he has tried to reevaluate his estimation of whites, but "I have yet to find a white man I can trust," he claims. And yet there are some whites in attendance. The Indians tolerate them when they must and avoid them when they can.

Despite the Indians' understandable reticence to divulge secrets to whites, an observer can gain some understanding of current Indian religious values. A young Shoshoni man is trying to explain Indian spirituality is grounded both in the supernatural realm and in the physical rituals that humans perform, the physical community that lives through interaction, and the physical world of nature that supports us. "We don't exist without these things," he affirms. When asked to explicate further, he replies that for himself as an Indian, materialism — the idea that what matters most is matter itself — is not so different from spirituality, a reverence for the sources of human life.

Phillip Deere comes to the issue in a different way. He states that he has always thought that in the Christian creation story (among others), humans are created last, not because they are the crown of creation, but because they are the most dependent of creatures. Most beings require only a few substances to continue in life, but humans need all types of flora and fauna in order to survive. "This is why Christians have thought that Indians worship trees, animals, and other nature-persons," he explains, "but that isn't so. Indians see there is a Great Mystery in those living beings that hold us in life; they see holiness in them, and that inspires awe and respect." In speech, Mr. Deere regularly invokes "the Creator" and "Mother Earth" as co-equals in sustaining human life. "Everything was put on earth to sustain life. Nothing was left out," he notes. "Mother Earth still follows the original instruction of life. She still provides. . . ." Human life, for Mr. Deere, is connected to all life on earth, as well as to celestial bodies and the bodies of the dead. When he reminds us that we come from the earth and will return to it, he is not trying to humble us as a Christian might ("Dust thou art . . ."); rather, he is exalting us by recalling our connections to our material (or, if you will, spiritual) ground of being. As for the Great Mystery, no one has ever seen it, and it is useless to try to unravel an unknowable, invisible thread of being. We can say that the Great Mystery is a tree or an animal, but we mean that there is the spirit of the Great Mystery in them. There is a mystery in the beings of the earth, and "we must give *thanks* to the earth," he concludes.

At Mr. Deere's place, Indians constantly invoke the image of Mother Earth, so much so that a non-Indian skeptic might regard it as a slogan, as ubiquitous and empty of meaning as "comrade" to a Russian Communist or "freedom" to an American. It may be that the evocation of this earthly sustainer is a cliché to some of the Indians (and non-Indians) in the movement — more stance than substance. But to spiritual leaders like Phillip Deere, an understanding of the concept leads to a crucial insight regarding contemporary Indian religiosity and the translation of religiosity into political rhetoric and action.

EACH EVENING PHILLIP Deere conducts a sweat lodge for his guests in the woods by his pond. Virtually every Indian participant takes at least one "sweat," and it is the sequence of ritual sweats — even more than the rhetoric in the roundhouse — that provides the grounding for the religious and political activity of the Youths and Elders Conference and the International Indian Treaty Council. In mundane terms, a sweat lodge is a sauna or steambath: an enclosed area in which people sweat under conditions of intense heat and steam. Phillip Deere's lodge is a mud-lined, excavated, cave-like mound in the side of a hill. It seats as many as ten men (the women have a separate lodge made of willow and canvas), seated around glowing volcanic rocks upon which sage-scented water is poured, creating steam.

To Mr. Deere the lodge is the womb of Mother Earth from whom the Muskogees emerged in the beginning of human history. The whole structure is a mound, the form of a pregnant woman's belly, and it evokes the ancient mounds in which Indians of the Southeast used to bury their dead — to return them to their mother after life on the surface of her body. As evening comes, Mr. Deere and the other men remove their clothes and return to the womb of the earth, naked as they emerged in mythic times. They sit in fetal position around the red rocks, their backs to the cool interior mud walls. For close to an hour Mr. Deere repeatedly spills hot water on the stones, creating a hot, wet, perfumed oven. At the same time he speaks:

> When people first came out of the earth, they had no language, no way of teaching each other. The only sound they could make was a wolf-cry, and that cry was an utterance of need. These humans were totally dependent upon the earth, and so they cried. Babies today cry the same cry when they emerge from the birth canal, and the mother responds to their cry of need by placing them to the breast, just as Mother Earth forever hears our cry of need and feeds us with the foods and materials of the world. She takes care of us, as she always has, ever since we emerged. The sweat lodge reminds us of that relationship by returning us to the womb — the hot, dark, wet womb which was our original home.
>
> At the same time, by entering the lodge, we seek our grandfather, the Great Mystery. In the process of this

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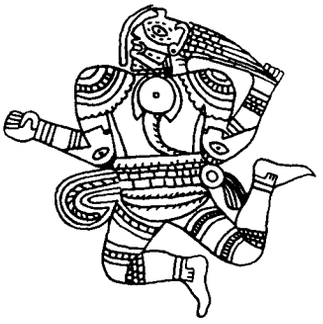
primal renewal — required more of men than women, since the latter are able to cleanse themselves with menstruation — we purify ourselves of our wrongdoings. We set ourselves aright; we gain balance and harmony with other humans, with the world. No one has ever done anything so wrong that a sweat lodge cannot purify, and if we leave the lodge and do bad things again, we can always come back to the lodge and renew ourselves. The earth's lodge is always here for us.

The sweat bath ritual constitutes a chance at reunion with Mother Earth, the Great Mystery, other humans, and one's own ideals. In the womb the Indians sing like full-throated wolves, crying out their prayers and their devotion to each other and the earth. At times the men pray: for each other, for members of the American Indian Movement, for the Earth herself, for Indian children and for all people. At the end Mr. Deere reminds them that, "we sweat to seek and find our relatives. No one is lonely who is in the sweat." With this the men pay their respects to the water, without whom life would



be impossible. One by one they leave the lodge, uttering, "All my relations!" as they cross the threshold, out to the dusk. They enter the pond for a moonlit swim, then a smoke by the fire, and a return to the camp.

As the International Treaty Council begins, Phillip Deere's roundhouse undergoes a change. Mr. Deere takes down some religious paraphernalia from the center of his roundhouse, while the recognizable personages of the American Indian Movement — Russell Means, John Trudell and others — begin to arrive.

Jessica Lefevre, IITC's young white lawyer, describes the Treaty Council's nine years of progress in placing issues important to Indians before an international forum at the United Nations. In 1977 IITC gained consultant status within the U.N. as a non-governmental organization (NGO). As such, IITC is an "expert consultant" to the U.N., giving Indians a "voice" internationally. Without this voice, Lefevre says, the world would never know what happens to Indians and what Indians think.

IITC takes part in the drafting of U.N. law, especially regarding issues concerning indigenous peoples worldwide and the environment, its two main areas of "expertise." IITC's power consists of influencing potential allies, and then applying "peer pressure" on the U.S. or other nations which purportedly mistreat indigenous peoples and the land. Through the U.N., IITC has a modicum of "social pressure - enforcement," Lefevre notes, causing "embarrassment and ridicule" to the U.S. — the type of pressure that traditional tribal societies bring to bear against their members in the absence of police forces.

THE TREATY COUNCIL gets to work, drafting resolutions to be presented at the U.N. Indian kinship with the earth plays a crucial role in these major political resolutions. Kinship with one's ancestors creates one of the most emotional issues at the council: a report and resolution concerning the desecration of Indian graves. Jan Hammill of American Indians Against Desecration (AIAD) recalls that in 1978, during the AIM-sponsored Longest Walk to Washington, D.C., Indians discovered that every museum they saw had Indian remains in them, both on display and in warehouses. As a result, AIAD was formed and a study was conducted, the results of which indicate that anywhere from 300,000 to 600,000 remains of Indian people are in museums in this country alone.

Most non-Indians probably see nothing unethical in this practice; however, the Indians at Phillip Deere's roundhouse are outraged by the archaeologists and museum directors who earn their careers by having a "well rounded collection of human beings" under their domain. "We are all on display," Ms. Hammill states, "and why? Because science is God in this country," because science — which has the uncritical support of non-Indian America — devalues everything it looks at, "takes the spirit out of everything it studies. It insists on secularism and won't respect religious points of view." For Ms. Hammill and the other Indians, this is an example of "science versus religion," white values versus Indian values. Also, she indicates, whites think of Indians as a captive population, like animals in a zoo, to be observed despite their objections. "Whether Indians are dead or alive, they are objects on display."

Billy Redwing Tayac, chief of the Piscataways in Maryland, connects the issue of desecration to the foundation of Indian spirituality: "I was always told by my elders that heaven is reuniting with your kin, your ancestors, in the spirit world. We used to carry our ancestors' bones with us. They were our identity, our human source of life. Our bones were their bones; our flesh was their flesh; our blood was their blood. Moreover, our bones and our ancestors' bones became one with the earth. The earth is sacred and so are our bones. It is natural that they should merge once again with the soil from which they sprang. Instead, they are removed from their mother and placed in crates and on shelves in museums. I say we must protect these ancestors today, even if it takes combat against grave robbers. I say, how can we embrace our ancestors in heaven if we don't protect them now?"

The major IITC document is the "Draft Principles for Guiding Deliberations of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations" for the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Drawing on previous IITC statements like the 1981 "International NGO Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the Land" as well as the "Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environ-

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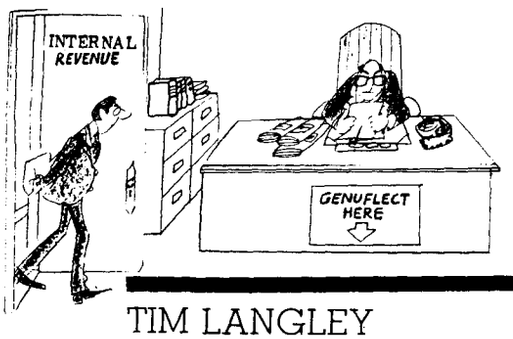
ment," it defines indigenous peoples' present-day situation as one of "neo-colonialism." In the face of this control by modern nation states, the document reaffirms the "self-determination" of indigenous peoples, emphasizing the need of these peoples to "land as the territorial base for the existence of indigenous populations as such." It states that "in no case may an indigenous nation or people be deprived of its own means of subsistence" and it defends the "right" of these peoples "to protect the environmental integrity of their territories by refusing to allow any form of development which . . . threatens that integrity." Finally, it attempts to prohibit states from polluting earth, air, water, and other nature materials upon which indigenous peoples depend for their survival.

These propositions appear secularly pragmatic — Indians are trying to protect their future by protecting their environmental land base. But the text goes on to stress that, "Indigenous populations are the people of the land, in that the way of life of many indigenous populations is intimately related to the natural environment, as manifest through beliefs and practices which hold this relationship to be a primary consideration in the determination of the form of ownership and manner of use of the land. Therefore *the preservation of the society and culture of indigenous populations represents a means of protecting and preserving the natural resources of the earth,* including the air, water, land, flora and fauna, and those natural ecosystems contained within the territories of the indigenous populations [emphasis mine]." IITC is depicting Indians (and by extension, other indigenous peoples) as guardians of their Mother Earth, whose strength of defense rests upon their spiritual tradition and political autonomy. Therefore, the document supports the right of indigenous peoples not only to their religious beliefs but to free "access to areas of land or natural formations" that they deem sacred. Indian religious freedom depends on contact with particular areas of land, the material and spiritual sources of life; and the survival of the environment — under attack from transnational corporations, agribusiness, energy developers, governmental agencies, and an underlying value system that finds nature devoid of worth except as a resource — depends on Indians' continuing ability to tend their Mother Earth.

The Indians in council at Phillip Deere's roundhouse hope to gather to themselves the spiritual traditions of their people in order to retain and regain an autonomous identity, serving in the process of renewal as guardians of the environment and contemporary prophets who can lead Americans, and perhaps the peoples of the world, to their spiritual center. Non-Indians would do well to understand the currency of Indian spiritual politics, its vitality today and the power it can generate.

THE RELIGIOUS MEANING OF TAX RESISTANCE



On not rendering to Caesar

TIM LANGLEY

THE STERN PURITANS of the Massachusetts Bay Colony would have smiled. Or rather, they would have approved.

The penalty for frivolity in the United States today is a fine of $500, plus accumulated interest in the event of failure to pay promptly. The agency of enforcement is the Internal Revenue Service, a branch of the government which presumably knows frivolity when it sees it.

Last year my wife and I decided not to pay half the income taxes on my salary. When the time came to file our 1982 returns we told the IRS what we had done, and that we considered the money we had withheld from them to be a "war crimes deduction" There is an article in the IRS Code which acknowledges the precedence of international law over the Code itself, and which forbids the collection of taxes where that would conflict with any treaty to which the United States is a party. Since the United States is a party to any number of human-rights and warfare-limitation conventions which appear to proscribe the indiscriminate killing of noncombatants, and since the same United States nevertheless finances with tax monies a global warmaking system which is designed to do precisely that, my wife and I reasoned that the portion of taxes collected in support of this system was being collected illegally, and that all Americans were therefore entitled to a substantial deduction. We were taking ours.

The IRS was not amused.

They informed us that our tax returns had been declared to be frivolous, and that we now owed the government $500 for being smart alecks. We wrote back assuring them that we had never been more serious in our lives. We elaborated on the religious basis of our convictions. We reiterated that the money we had held back had been placed in an escrow ac-

TIM LANGLEY *is a tax resister and the director of the South Dakota Peace and Justice Center. His articles on the arms race and other subjects ranging from homiletics to religious formation in parochial schools have appeared in various journals, including the* National Catholic Reporter.

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count, payable to the IRS at such time as the government could arrange to accept it without spending it in ways which violated our freedom of religion.

The IRS responded by informing us that we now owed them $507 for being both smart alecks and deadbeats. It is difficult to make an impression on a computer.

"So why bother?" People who share both our faith and our opposition to the state violence of nuclear weaponry advance a number of arguments against tax resistance as a tactic, one of which can be summarized in those three despairing words. Their point is that the government will get its money in the end, maybe more than you owed in the first place, and in the meantime what you may have envisioned as a bold witness will have degenerated into an unnoticed, dreary tug-of-war with uncomprehending bureaucrats who are no more or less responsible for the nuclear arms race than anybody else.

The suggestion has also been made from friendly quarters that not only is tax resistance a waste of time, it is positively wrong. This is because in the United States citizens have access, however imperfect, to the process of social decision-making. We can write letters to the editor and to the Congress, we can organize petition campaigns and ballot initiatives, we can take part in public demonstrations, and, of course, we can vote. This system represents a stable and nonviolent means of social change, though the pace may be slow and the outcome uncertain. When committed people succumb to their impatience and take action outside the sanctioned channels of this system, they set precedents more dangerous than they may know. With perhaps the best of intentions they contribute to the erosion of all law, all process, which ultimately, and ironically, reinforces the appeal of totalitarianism in social decision-making.

A third common misgiving upholds civil disobedience in principle, but insists that it must be organized on a mass scale to be valid. For that to happen, the time must be ripe, and such ripeness cannot be willed into being. Though the strategist and the organizer may prepare the way for this moment, and though they may be needed to take full advantage of its power when it does arrive, the timing of its arrival is finally not under their control. The moment of ripeness for mass tax resistance has not yet come, so the argument runs, and tax resisters need to consider whether they are not perhaps trying to build their sand castles at high tide.

These objections to civil disobedience have a long history. They also, I might add, have a long future, and my intention here is not to cut that future short by locating the decisive rejoinders, point for point. I accept that people will always be saying these things.

What they say is not without merit. My wife and I are also involved in the nuclear freeze campaign and other more broadly based, conventional means of public persuasion. So perhaps we have hedged our bets.

Still, it seems to me, there is a fundmental difference between what we hope to accomplish with the one sort of tactic, and what we hope to accomplish with the other. Much uncertainty about the validity of civil disobedience stems from the widespread assumption, shared by proponents and critics alike, that the goal of civil disobedience is the same as that of conventional political action: to achieve social change. I'm not so sure about that.

Of late has been the season of the Gene Sharp books, the Gandhi movie, and the reenactment of the King march on Washington. In the accompanying discussions, the accent has been on the *utility* of the civil disobedience. The Danish resistance to the Nazis, Gandhi's Salt March, and the lunch counter sit-ins are cited as paradigms for the anti-nuclear movement, paradigms of how the intentional breaking of unjust laws can shake the foundations of unjust social structures.

Well, who can argue with that?

But when we recommend civil disobedience primarily and essentially as a successful means of social change, we invite critics to present counter-examples in which civil disobedience failed, or counter-examples in which the political process alone sufficed, or speculations about why civil disobedience is not a good tactic for this issue, in this place, at this time. And off we go, into a discussion which I am not sure is the one we should be having.

My wife and I resist taxation fundamentally because we know what our money is buying, and we wish to avoid doing what is wrong. What we hope to change by our actions is not so much U.S. nuclear policy as our own complicity in that policy. For this reason I wonder if what we are doing can properly be called a "tactic" at all. The point of refusing to pay for bombs is to get out of paying for bombs. We will not have to wait a year or a decade or until after we're dead to discover if our action worked. The minute we began doing it, it worked.

This is not to deny the social utility of civil disobedience, particularly on a massive scale. I am all for it. Let's organize. Social change is to civil disobedience as light is to a bonfire.

But light is not the only reason you build a bonfire, and probably not the most important reason at that. Whatever the utility of civil disobedience as a tactic for social change, its validation lies elsewhere.

We have all become intoxicated with the nonviolent resistance of Gandhi. We should sober up by reflecting on the nonviolent resistance of Franz Jaegerstaater.

JAEGERSTAATER was a high-school-educated Catholic farmer born in Austria in 1907. He had a wife and three daughters. He liked motorcycles.

Franz was the only citizen of his village to vote against the forced incorporation of Austria into Germany in 1938. He was the only citizen of his village to refuse to accept Nazi farm subsidies. He was the only citizen of his village to refuse induction into the Nazi army. For this last, he was imprisoned for two years and finally beheaded in 1943.

Throughout his ordeal, ably documented by Gordon Zahn in his 1961 book *In Solitary Witness*, Jaegerstaater's primary motivation for resisting appears to have been the avoidance of complicity in what he regarded as the mortal sin of Nazism.

Certainly he accomplished little else. What he did affected the Third Reich not a whit. No one who witnessed his resis-

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tance was moved to join him. Today he is not much celebrated even in his own village, and his story is not well known even in the peace movement.

We who do know the story of Franz Jaegerstaater, however, must wrestle with the question of whether his resistance, his act of civil disobedience, had any validity. The answer to this question is of no importance to Franz Jaegerstaater. It is of immense importance to us who ask it.

It is a troublesome question because, I suspect, most of us are made rather uncomfortable and even frightened by someone who would do what Franz Jaegerstaater did in those circumstances, for those reasons. Something in both his reasoning and his courage is alien to us. Yet something in us wants to stand up and cheer.

We cannot, I think, affirm the validity of Franz Jaegerstaater's witness without acknowledging the essentially and irreducibly religious nature of saying "no" to the state. Behind every such "no" authentically uttered to the state lies a "yes" to a sacred reality which supersedes the state, and which is prior to all considerations of social utility. The resistance of Franz Jaegerstaater illustrates this point with such force and clarity precisely because it had no social utility: the Nazi state was powerful enough to suffocate any such reverberation. If the meaning and validity of an act of civil disobedience is equal to its contribution to positive social change, then the act of Franz Jaegerstaater had no meaning, no validity.

But that is not true. So we are led to look elsewhere for the source of the meaning and validity which we cannot deny. We are led to discover the broadly religious foundations of the impulse to resist state crimes. It is not that we discover that Franz Jaegerstaater was a religious man, for we knew that already, and it may not have any significance. What we discover is that acts of civil disobedience are inherently religious in nature: not just in Jaegerstaater's mind, but, as it were, objectively; not just in Jaegerstaater's case, but universally.

At the moment when wrong laws are broken, those who break them are not privileged to experience in advance their vindication. The feeling in the gut of Gandhi as he burned his passbook, or in the gut of Rosa Parks as she refused to surrender her bus seat, or in the guts of the eight as they smashed the warhead nosecones, is the same cold feeling of fear and exhilaration for all. No one knows for sure what will come of it, if anything. But, at that moment, what will come of it is not the point.

The point, at that moment, is to cease contributing to that which is wrong, to cease participating by inertia in the maiming activity of the state, to stop being on the state's side in wrongdoing.

Beyond that, I venture, even for resisters who do not believe in God, all is in God's hands.

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Stage

'DON'T AH ME ME'

MUSICALLY SPEAKING

BACK IN 1921, Sigmund Romberg could still dish up a Schubertian "Song of Love" in *Blossom Time*. By 1937 a working girl in *Pins and Needles* would insist, "Sing Me a Song with Social Significance." *Autres temps, autres moeurs* – that's French for *you pays your therapist and you takes your choice*. This is the season of "Sing Me a Song of Family Counseling."

When the musical comedy began to turn serious in the 1940s, to use the book as more than a skeleton on which to hang songs, it was inevitable that the material would echo straight plays. The generation gap, to use the easy label, is one of the persistent themes of American drama (or any drama: *v., King Lear*). Although it helped form some of our most important plays — *Death of a Salesman, The Glass Menagerie* — it carried the seeds of its own corruption, a tendency to analyze the drama to death. Although talking things out may sometimes work in therapy sessions, talking at cross purposes is the verbal life blood of theater. Tragedy, irony, real wit (as against mask-over-angst smart talk) dried up in plays in which presumably serious dramatists confused their job with that of counselors. Most plays that bring down the curtain in a wash of new understanding are dramatically unsatisfying to me — all tell and no show — and it hardly helps matters for the characters to sing their family grievances. With rare exceptions, musicals have happy endings which, in this context, means that parents and children can embrace and erase a lifetime of misunderstanding with a few words or a song or, as in *The Rink*, an uplifting silhouette of the generations joined. Perhaps part of the appeal of Peter Brooks's production of *la tragédie de Carmen* at Lincoln Center is that Carmen and Don José do not sit down and talk/sing their troubles away.

Amen Corner, which came and went quickly in the Fall, was the first of this season's family musicals. It stuck close to the James Baldwin play on which it was based, a coming-of-age drama in which young David finds his own way after negotiating the troubled territory between his life-denying mother, a storefront preacher, and his life-embracing father, a jazz musician. There is vigor in the shout songs Garry Sherman wrote for the church scenes — as one might expect from the composer of *Purlie* — but the plot songs are tedious. It was characteristic of the production that after lifting the audience up with the spirited "In His Own Good Time," the first act curtain came down to the extended whine of "Every time We Call It Quits." The priorities of *Amen Corner* were clear, the sentimental drama over the musical.

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If *Amen Corner* was based on a standard maturation play, maturity in several other musicals was encased in an even more familiar plot — parent gets child, parent loses child, parent gets child. It even turned up in *Doonesbury*. Garry Trudeau's attempt to make a musical out of his cartoon characters was not particularly successful. Despite an occasional sharp one-liner, the satiric heart had gone out of the material. It was just a case of the likable *Doonesbury* kids getting together for a song — an impression heightened by Elizabeth Swados's innocuous music —and it was about as pointed as *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*. I mention it in this familial context because in the middle of the second act, the long promised confrontation between Joanie and J.J. takes place. The woman who ran away to find herself and the now grown deserted daughter meet, trade recriminations and begin to understand one another; all this with the aid of a helping of musical treacle called "Mother."

The children are not yet grown in *The Tap Dance Kid*, but for most of the evening they appear to be neurotics in the making. The stern, cold lawyer father does not want his son to be a dancer like his uncle (without whom there would be no show) and does not even notice his overweight, overwrought daughter who wants to be a lawyer like Daddy. It looks like a simple case of the dictatorial father, the old curmudgeon who is ripe for a heart-wringing cure, when suddenly at the end of the second act, the father gets a chance to unburden himself to the considerable surprise of everyone on and off stage. In the course of this long, painful number, he counters the show-business dreams of his son and brother-in-law with his own dream about achievement that will enhance the status of the blacks. It is understandable if wrong-headed that he should find dancing demeaning to his race, but it is difficult to understand why that should lead him to a preoccupation with material goods and appearances, to a tendency to condescend to his wife and daughter and to an inability to hug his children. Rational analysis has no place in a consideration of "William's Song," however; it is enough that his family be able to see the aching heart beneath the pin stripe. I do not know what happens in the Louise Fitzhugh novel on which the show is based, but her title, *Nobody's Family Is Going to Change*, is not very prophetic. They all rally round in a teary bout of mutual understanding, and the curtain comes down with the four of them doing a reprise of "Class Act," the club number that the mother, the uncle and the ghost of the grandfather did in Act I.

The daughter of *The Tap Dance Kid* has a number of fat-girl songs (done with a fine belting style by understudy Tracey Mitchem the night I was there) which indicate that she wants her father not only to recognize her embryonic legal mind but to tell her she is pretty. The second of these is the whole plot of *The Rink*. Angel (Liza Minelli) comes home to the skating rink which her mother (Chita Rivera) has just sold. For Angel, it is a symbol of an imaginary past she would like to create; for Anna, it is a lifetime of being put upon. In the end, the women are reconciled, the past laid to rest, the rink torn down. Fred Ebb and John Kander provide Anna with a chin-up number called "We Can Make It." Given the circumstances in which she sings it —to her husband just before he deserts her and to her daughter shortly before she runs away — the conventionality of Kander's music and the embarrassing obviousness of Ebb's words seem almost intentional, a satiric touch. That is what I would like to believe — harking back to the Ebb and Kander of *Cabaret* and *70 Girls 70* — but *The Rink* is a flaccid show like their *Woman of the Year*. The best that the score has to offer are some affectionate aggression duets that are momentarily sprightly but end up feeding the bromidic mushiness of Terrence McNally's book.

What one remembers from the shows are performers. Ruth Brown coming in on "In His Own Good Time" and "Leanin' on the Lord" to lift those already jubilant numbers to new heights. Hinton Battle, the uncle in *The Tap Dance Kid*, leading Alan Weeks (the ghostly grandpa), Alfonso Ribeiro (the boy) and the chorus in celebratory tap numbers. Liza Minnelli belting out her numbers as her fans expect, the sob of regret or defiance under the boom, and the admirable Chita Rivera denying the victimized Anna just by the way she takes the stage. So much positive power trapped in saccharine therapy sessions.

GERALD WEALES

Screen

TRUE NORTH

A THIRD-WORLD FIRST

ONE SCENE from *El Norte* sums up its rare surprising strength. Two Guatemalan refugees are emerging from a harrowing trip through a sewage tunnel between Tijuana and the United States. When they finally climb out — after surviving darkness, stench, rats, and the border patrol — they see the lights of San Diego's freeways spread out before them and their eyes dilate with happy wonder. On one level, the scene is bathetic, almost vapid: *we* know this plastic paradise is no magic fairyland. But *El Norte* verges on the cliché only to redeem it: the bathos only underlines the earnestness, the desperateness of the migrants' desire. The scene, like the whole movie, gives us new eyes.

El Norte is unusual: although made in Hollywood, eighty percent of the screenplay is in Spanish, showing how seriously its makers took the realities of migrant life. Its central characters are a brother and sister — an unromantic twist on Hollywood formulas — named Enrique and Rosa, who flee their village when soldiers murder their father for talking up land reform. The two siblings pass through Mexico to reach Los Angeles and there, despite setbacks, combine luck, hard work, and unconscious charm to win comparatively decent jobs. It is hard not to fall in love with their naiveté, and feel both pity and fear for its consequences.

El Norte's power is thus not political, but personal. There's no propaganda in the movie, just visual poetry. suspense and

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emotional force. Directed by Gregory Nava and produced by Anne Thomas, both of whom wrote the screenplay, *El Norte* was made independently, without the help — interference — of a major studio. The result is a minor masterpiece with a rich sensual texture and vibrant heart. The heart comes mostly from two Mexican novice actors, David Villalpando and Zaide Silvia Guttierez, who play Enrique and Rosa, with simplicity, grace, and grit.

The movie is dominated by the contrast of two sets of images. When first considering flight from their village, they see the United States as pictured in Spanish editions of *Good Housekeeping;* when they arrive, however, they must settle in a squalid Los Angeles motel for migrant workers. As a result though routed politically, Enrique and Rosa never exactly leave Guatemala, the subject of *El Norte*'s best cinematographic poetry. There is terror there, to be sure, especially in scenes set at a picturesque, catacomb-like old hacienda where soldiers murder and mutilate their father. But the country is lushly presented at the beginning and never forgotten. *El Norte*'s Guatemala is mountains and mist, turkey vultures capering in village doorways, candlelit altars in every cottage, women dressed in stark, neat ponchos dyed vivid yellows, reds, and indigos. Although sharply realistic on the whole, *El Norte* uses dreams, hallucinations and reminiscences of Guatemala as expressionist brushstrokes to highlight the pathos of uprootedness — as, for example, when Rosa fantasizes her mother preparing tortillas in her dingy motel room.

Villalpando and Guttierez are ably assisted in *El Norte* by Ernesto Gomez Cruz as their father and Alicia del Logo as their mother. But in California their principal sidekicks are spunkier father and mother figures: one is Monty (Trinidad Silva), owner of the motel and a requisite Fernando Valenzuela sweatshirt, who tries to guide Enrique to new jobs; the other is Nacha (Lupe Ontiveros) who saves Rosa from police raids on garment sweatshops, gets her cleaning work, and disguises her as a local with a trip to Sears. The acting throughout is superb ensemble work.

Significantly, the villain of *El Norte* is not a "gringo," but another member of the California Latin community, whom the "gringos" see as "all alike." From the bottom up, the view is different: not a mass of foreign faces, but a tangle of jealousies among Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Central Americans (not to mention the recent Asian arrivals). That is, unlike many recent films about the struggles of third-world peoples, *El Norte* actually concerns *them,* their viewpoints, their hostilities, their backgrounds, and even the distortions crucial to their survival. Unlike *Under Fire, Missing,* or *The Year of Living Dangerously, El Norte* does not concern an Anglo hero and/or heroine who is plunged into a barely comprehensible jungle melodrama and who evolves from partial sympathy toward this alien world to final rejection of it. As John Powers observes in a recent *American Film,* the plots of such movies can be seen as implicitly racist — not in the Kipling but Conradian manner: they concern no white man's burden to save the "lesser breeds," but document the need for the *white man* to be saved from a heart of darkness. *El Norte,* on the other hand, looks at some of the hearts from the dark world (daring to be particular and *really* discriminate) and finds them bright, sympathetic, and inspiring. In short, *Under Fire* and the others are first-world third-world films, *El Norte* is third-world first.

To be sure, there are defects in *El Norte:* Indifferent filming of Los Angeles and some hackneyed melodrama at the close. Nevertheless, *El Norte* is a remarkable film. According to Nava and Thomas, they approached some Hollywood studios with *El Norte* and were told to remake it with anglicized protagonists as human rights activists, casting, as one producer suggested, Brooke Shields in the lead. To their great credit, they resisted such blandishments. They have also caused a controversy about what category *El Norte* belongs in at the 1985 Academy Awards; not a foreign film since it was made by Americans, it still might qualify as the best "non-English language film" next year.

Perhaps *El Norte* deserves more: certainly it compares favorably with 1983's best picture, *Gandhi. El Norte* is no first-world version of a sanitized third-world saint. The scene in the sewage tunnel at the border — before Enrique and Rosa emerge to see San Diego — outdoes in power and terror the heroism of pasteboard martyrs and the suffering of faceless casts of thousands. *El Norte* has the real stuff.

TOM O'BRIEN

(Tom O'Brien, one of the guest critics currently reviewing movies for Commonweal, *teaches at the Manhattan School of Music.)*

Media

INFANT ART

THE VIDEO IS BORN

HAVE YOU SEEN the latest Fleetwood Mac? Or the latest Madness? Or the latest Def Leppard?

Well, if you haven't, I can't really say that I blame you (much as I might be inclined to do so). But I trust you are at least hip enough to know that Fleetwood Mac, Madness, and Def Leppard are all rock groups— the first now, unfortunately, defunct and the latter two, with rather ambiguous means for rejoicing, still alive. If you didn't know that, you can keep on reading anyway; we can't all, after all, know *everything* (I, for one, have never been certain of the precise reasons for Walter Mondale).

But there is something I hope you noticed. I did not ask if you had *heard* the latest Fleetwood Mac, etc.: I asked if you had seen them. That, I think, is increasingly what kids are asking one another about their favorite groups; and that, increasingly, is what will alter both American popular music and American television.

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What I am talking about is the phenomenon called, somewhat redundantly, the "video". It is, nearly, a new art form. And it is taking over.

Now, as someone once observed (and the observation is clever enough that I am sure it must have been Chesterton), inventing a new art form is about as difficult as inventing a new sin, and equally worthy of celebration. The video, indeed, may turn out to be not only a new art form, but the salvation and resurrection of two other art forms in severe danger of exhaustion: rock music and the avant-garde film.

Not that the two forms, on the face of things, have a great deal in common. Except they are both forms which rely, for much of their energy, on deliberate outrage. Rock—let us be frank—is either upsetting, musically or lyrically, or it is not rock at all, but rather what rock critics call, contemptuously, "pop." In this respect, at least, the young Stravinsky of the *Sacre du printemps* and the early Rolling Stones of "Jumping Jack Flash" have more in common one with the other than either does with, say, Barry Manilow.

And the avant-garde film, likewise, has a long tradition of deliberate outrage, from Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* to the films of Stan Brakhage. The distinction between "high" and "popular" art has always been much more real to midcult arbiters of taste like *Time* and *Newsweek* than it has to the artists themselves. Joyce and Nabokov, two of the most Olympian figures of modern writing, are also two of the most deeply immersed and versed in the bric-a-brac of comic books, pop songs, advertisements, etc. (Yes, yes—and then there's Norman Mailer.)

Nor is this really anything new. From Petronius's *Satyricon*, written, like the Book of Revelations, under the reign of Nero, down to Mailer, a large proportion of Western art attempts to shock us out of our normal expectations of what art "should" be like. Indeed, there is a strong relationship between the scandalous *Satyricon* and the Book of Revelations: a Christian culture *has* to live in the perennial expectation of Apocalypse, and the culture's art has, correspondingly, to remind us of the possibility of the breaking of forms, the explosion of the normal.

The problem, of course, is that the outrage becomes, fairly rapidly, the predictable. Kafka's wonderful parable tells us that leopards keep breaking into the Temple and consuming the bread and wine, and that eventually this is accepted as part of the ritual. Or, in terms of rock-and-roll apocalyptism, you can only smash your guitar at the end of the concert so many times before that becomes *part* of the concert.

Both rock and the avant-garde film were in severe danger of this kind of exhaustion, before they met and married. Rock was in danger of spiraling downward into the deliberately untalented abyss of Punk, and the experimental film was in danger of becoming the increasingly abstract, artsy-craftsy product of a few UCLA film majors.

But they did meet, and they did marry, the over-funky and the over-sophisticated, and the marriage has begotten the video. A Tracy-Hepburn marriage, to be sure: and the child as healthy as one might expect from such.

You will notice that I have not yet told you what the video *is*: this is not (at least not wholly) a lapse in expository style, as much as it is an admission that (a) maybe you don't need to know since you've read all about videos in *Time* and the enterainment section of your local paper; and (b) in fact I don't *know* how to describe a video unless you've seen one — or many. Fats Waller, the great jazz pianist, was once asked by a wealthy matron what "swing" meant, and responded with the immortal line, "If you gotta ask, you'll never know." Or, as we used to say in Chicago, "You hadda *be* there."

The video, briefly, is a short film to accompany a rock song by a prominent (or sometimes not so prominent) group. It can be as simple as a mere film of the group performing (e.g. "Synchronicity II" by the Police) or as complicated as a three-minute daydream/nightmare narrative ("Gimme All Your Lovin' " by Z Z Top). In whatever case, it is usually a *very* high-tech performance, involving the kind of strobe-like cutting and elaborate editing that is the dream of every director and the despair of every poor soul sitting over the videotape editing machine. The video, in fact, is a three-minute art form that grew up, like most art forms, accidentally. For originally it was intended simply as a visual adjunct to records about to be marketed by major groups. Its nearest ancestors are, probably, TV commercials — some of which, at least, as people have been saying for years, are cleverer than the shows they interrupt — or brilliant, short bits of filmmaking like the main title sequences of the James Bond or Pink Panther movies.

Short, fast, hallucinatory, and lyrical: those are the characteristics of the video at its best. And as the form evolves — or perhaps the word is exfoliates — it is interesting to observe how the filmmaking eventually becomes as important as, or more important than, the lyrics of the song itself. (When I first drafted this piece, I predicted that sooner or later we would see credits, at the end of a piece, not just for the group performing the song, but for the director also. Already this has happened, in the case of Michael Jackson's "Thriller," which is virtually a short feature film — and which has spun off its own TV special in "The Making of Michael Jackson's 'Thriller.' ") To be sure, out of ten videos, seven (I am being generous) will be garbage: so will seven out of any ten novels, poems, or symphonies. But the other three will be extraordinary.

Chris de Burgh's "Don't Pay the Ferryman," for example, is simultaneously song *and* story, a three-minute film that *works* as a short film even though it is populated — or spangled — with radically unconnected images: Charon, the classical ferryman to the underworld, an eerie wedding scene, and de Burgh's own Gothic, Heathcliffe-like countenance lip-synching some of the words of the song. The group called Motley Crue has an even more detailed narrative video, "Looks That Kill," which can be seen either as a parable of male dominance or a parable of the dangers of sexism, but which is in either case a startling, and vaguely sinister, piece of filmmaking. And Billy Joel's "Pressure" is, simply, not only a brilliant song but one of the most brilliant, dream-like actualizations of the paranoid state of mind that I have seen, equaling even a film like Polanski's *Repulsion*.

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But it is pointless to go through a catalogue of videos, since there are so many of them. Rock and the cinema have both grown into fantastically, perhaps even grotesquely, high-tech forms of contemporary art. It is an interesting question, in fact, whether more sheer expenditure of effort and power is involved in making a full-length film, or mounting a tour for a group like The Who or Led Zeppelin. And it is also an interesting question — one that could not have been asked before this century — how far an "art" can presume to expend the dwindling amount of available energy on this planet. That is, when does "art" become waste?

But the two forms have made inevitable union in the new art of the video — utilizing yet another distinctively modern technology, TV, and generating a form which is perhaps as close as the cinema has come to the impressionism of the lyric poem, and as close as rock has approached to the status of symbolism. If the art is still in its infancy — ten years ago there *were* no videos — and still struggling with elemental clumsinesses, that is no reason to doubt its validity, its interest, or the degree to which it reaffirms the perennial ability of popular culture to resuscitate itself; to find the possibility of meaningful utterance in the very stuff of contemporary mechanism, the ghost in the machine.

FRANK McCONNELL

(Frank McConnell's most recent book is a novel, Murder Among Friends, *Walker, $12.95.)*

MUSLIM THOUGHT IN TRANSITION

Islam: faith & ideology

JANE HUSSAIN

IN STRUCTURE, *Faith and Power* and *Islam and Modernity* are quite similar, while their subject matters overlap. Both books deal with past and present trends in Muslim thought and each looks at some half dozen Muslim areas repeatedly, at different periods in time. Because Edward Mortimer is a journalist concerned with Muslim thought on politics, his book is more readable and accessible to the average layperson than that of Fazlur Rahman, an Islamic scholar exploring the more esoteric topic of Muslim ideas on thought (and education). The two books differ sharply in viewpoint as well as readability. Both authors agree that while social justice is a basic aim of Islam, there is no definitive sociopolitical blueprint to be found either in its scripture or traditions. It is in the final chapters of their books that the two authors really diverge.

Edward Mortimer ends with an anti-conclusion: There is not one but many Islams. Therefore, Islam should not be thought of as a geopolitical force in the world. He feels that his refusal to choose the "true Islam" from among the many versions which he has come across in his two years of travel and research is appropriate to his identity as a non-Muslim. He assumes that if he *were* a Muslim, he would be obliged to pick and choose. Fazlur Rahman, who is a Muslim, has a different perspective. For him, a Muslim's duty is not to choose but to think anew; the true Islam is always under construction. He argues that a permanently ongoing process of "rethinking Islam" is necessary to enable its reapplication to continuously changing circumstances. Fazlur Rahman is not at all discouraged by the diversity of interpretations to be found over space and time in the Muslim world. It is the lack of creative, rational thought and scholarly method displayed in the currently dominant trends which he finds most disturbing. In the last section of his book, therefore, he presents a suggested program for the reconstruction of the Muslim intellectual tradition.

FAITH AND POWER
THE POLITICS OF ISLAM
Edward Mortimer
Random House, $19.95, 432 pp.

ISLAM AND MODERNITY
TRANSFORMATION OF AN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION
Fazlur Rahman
University of Chicago, $15, 172 pp.

Fazlur Rahman's book is obviously aimed at a particular readership: Islamic scholars, would-be scholars, and educators. Edward Mortimer's work, on the other hand, is meant for the general reader. One can imagine two major types of readers for Mortimer's book: Westerners who are wondering about Islam as a geopolitical force in world affairs, and inhabitants of the Muslim world who are wondering about Islam as a political force in their own lives. To both of these readerships, Edward Mortimer excuses himself from drawing any relevant conclusions whatsoever. As both a Westerner and a long-time resident of the Muslim world, I found this doubly disappointing.

Certainly, *Faith and Power* can be thought of as a useful handbook, an easy reference guide, if you please, to the political thought of the Muslim world, past and present. Even in this capacity, however, the book has certain limitations. Although his treatments of the six Muslim areas are to my knowledge accurate and objective, Edward Mortimer has of necessity had to provide his history of political thought without either its political or its intellectual context. This leads to two inevitable, albeit unintentional distortions: we receive an

JANE HUSSAIN, *a writer and educator in Pakistan, where she has lived for many years, is the author of two volumes of* An Illustrated History of Pakistan *(Oxford University Press). She is completing an economic history of the region.*

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exaggerated impression of the centrality of the position of politics in the thought of various important Muslim intellectuals and groups, and an exaggerated impression of the decisiveness of the roles played by the various tendencies of thought in actual political developments.

Mortimer reminds me of the analysts of the sixties who assured us that Communism was not monolithic —thus implying that it was not a great threat to Western security. In spite of its disunity, however, Communism, both in terms of its professed ideals, and in terms of various governments and groupings, has of course continued to have tremendous impact on world events. I think that Islam, for all its divergency, will also continue to play an important if not major role on the global stage. And even if the implications of Edward Mortimer's book were credible — even if the Islamic resurgence is neither a danger nor a blessing to the West — it seems very incomplete and off balance not to ask whether this resurgence constitutes a danger or a blessing to the inhabitants of the Muslim world itself. While reading both of these books, the uppermost question in my own mind was whether an ideological state necessarily evolves towards suppression, or whether it is possible to build a pluralistic, liberal, ideologically-based society.

This is ground on which Edward Mortimer declines to tread. Just as he maintains a studied neutrality as to what is genuinely Islamic, he also carefully refrains from making predictions about the future. He is so cautious, in fact, that he abstains from applying almost any labels (such as "fundamentalist") and refuses to recognize any international trends (although he does point out isolated similarities between countries). This bending over backwards may be the stance Edward Mortimer finds suitable to his identity as a non-Muslim, but I think it goes far beyond objectivity (which is a commendable feature of this book) and is appropriate only to an extremely well-connected and highly respected journalist unwilling to antagonize any of his important sources.

Fazlur Rahman is not at all neutral. He is very unhappy with what he calls the "punitive Islam" of the "neo-revivalists" in the countries now undergoing so-called "Islamization." Nevertheless, he believes that a total rethinking of Islam can enable the establishment of genuinely Islamic, tolerant ideological states in the Muslim world.

Fazlur Rahman places the blame for the present-day dominance of the neo-revivalist mentality throughout the Muslim world squarely on the shoulders of the Westernized elites of those countries. The affluent, urban members of Muslim society are often, he points out, even more ignorant of their religious heritage than their less privileged, generally illiterate countrymen. The fundamentalist political parties have managed to leap into the vacuum created by the religious ignorance of the Westernized elite on the one hand and the practical ignorance of the traditional Muslim establishment on the other.

In his concern over the impact of the simplistic solutions offered by the openly anti-intellectual fundamentalist militants, I think that Fazlur Rahman makes an overly charitable assessment of the past, present, and potential role of the traditional Muslim establishment — the "learned men" or *ulema*. In this book, Fazlur Rahman downplays his differences with the *ulema*, and mainly complains about the deficiencies in their training. In calling their version of Islam a "minimal Islam," he implies that it is incomplete but fairly harmless.

This "minimal Islam" of the religious establishment, which emphasizes the individual's ritual obligations and neglects the Quranic imperatives to build a good and just social order, results, according to Fazlur Rahman, from an unduly literalistic interpretation of the Quran. After the death of the Prophet Mohammed in A.D. 632, the Companions of the Prophet generally ruled by the spirit rather than by the letter of the revelations as collected in the Quran. But when controversies arose, they would try to legitimize their decisions by quoting chapter and verse. Thus the interpretation and application of the teachings of the Quran actually got off to a bad start. Similarly, the anti-intellectualism of the "learned men" is traced by Fazlur Rahman back to the first centuries of the Muslim era, when Islamic learning "in most cases consisted exclusively of memorizing the Quran, copying down traditions . . . and deducing legal points from them." This initial tendency towards rigidity was compounded with the gradual bifurcation of religious knowledge from practical knowledge, a process which was complete by around A.D. 950.

Standard present-day interpretations hold that Muslim thought had become generally stultified by this time, but usually emphasize the political and economic circumstances accompanying the decline of the Abbassid Caliphate. I think that Fazlur Rahman is to be admired for his boldness in pushing back the origins of Muslim intellectual stagnation to the earliest days of Islam. Edward Mortimer has already been gently chided (see *The New York Review of Books*, June 30, 1983) for repeating the long debunked view which blames outside Mongol invaders for destroying all that was best in Muslim culture around A.D. 1250. Fazlur Rahman's version is bound to antagonize more than a few of his co-religionists. It is in the interpretation of events in the following period, that of the ascendancy of the Seljuk Turks and Ayyubids, that I would beg to differ with Fazlur Rahman.

This is the period in which the *madrasah* or seminary system became institutionalized under state patronage. While acknowledging that the *madrasah* have, from their origins, handed down a sterile tradition, Fazlur Rahman overlooks the motives of the Seljuks and Ayyubids in founding a system which would do just this. These rulers wanted a religious establishment which would not question their legitimacy or judge them by the moral standards of Islam. The *madrasah* and the *ulema* trained in them have been inextricably bound up with politics ever since. The members of the *ulema* do not assume a political role as moral critics of government. At the same time they do enter the political arena to ensure the continued honoring of the bargain originally struck with the Seljuks and Ayyubids; in return for silence on social issues, they will be recognized as

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arbiters of personal issues.

In all of the countries now undergoing "Islamization," the rejection of the Western style judicial systems and their replacement by "Islamic courts" — enforcing not only what Fazlur Rahman terms "minimal Islam," but also "punitive Islam" — are seen as basic and fundamental to this process. Fazlur Rahman, however, feels that since law-making in the *ulema* institutions has been stagnant for centuries, it is no longer feasible to dispense with the Western-inspired, secular judicial systems. Instead, he proposes to gradually "Islamisize" the present legal systems by enlightening public conscience. Thus, just when the *ulema* are terribly excited about their new or revived role in society, Fazlur Rahman would limit their role to teacher and advisor rather than lawyer and judge. While Fazlur Rahman sees the main duty of an Islamic state as the pursuit of social justice, the *ulema* tend to acknowledge a state as Islamic in proportion to the importance accorded them in enforcing personal law. Fazlur Rahman and the *ulema* differ on the very nature of the Islamic state, but this difference is nowhere stated and can only with difficulty be pieced together from references scattered throughout the book.

In terms of their willingness to master a traditional body of knowledge, Fazlur Rahman contrasts the *ulema* favorably with the fundamentalists. He strongly condemns the fundamentalists' contention that learning is unnecessary and that all moral truths are self-evident given the Quran and tradition, although he agrees with their claim that much of the *ulema*'s body of learning is stagnant and largely irrelevant. The *ulema* and the fundamentalists generally have separate political parties. The fundamentalists tend to have grandiose aims of introducing a dictatorship of the "true believers," while the *ulema* parties often act as interest groups ready to form coalitions with any powerful group recognizing their role and status. But in actual practice, both groups overlap and sometimes merge. The *maulvi*, or officiator at the local mosque, is often as ignorant of Islam as any fundamentalist. And members of the *ulema* often call for measures as draconian and punitive as those demanded by the fundamentalists. Both groups of conservatives often unite to push government efforts to interefere in what many would consider to be the private lives of individual citizens.

In Pakistan these days, the local preacher or *maulvi* is the only political orator allowed to use loudspeakers. His sound system is such that not only his congregation but the entire neighborhood cannot help but hear his sermons. (Over the years, I have become a connoisseur of Friday sermons, while hanging out the laundry; women are not allowed in most of Pakistan's mosques.) If by progressive interpretation of Islam we mean an emphasis on social justice rather than on personal law, then it is difficult to see how such an interpretation, cutting across the perceived interests of the *maulvi*s, can gain ground, given the restrictions placed on freedom of expression in almost every Muslim country.

Fazlur Rahman does recognize freedom of expression as a necessary precondition for the construction of an intelligently thought out and nationally debated Islamic system. He concludes his section on Pakistan's intellectual prospects with the observation that

> free thought and thought are synonymous, and one cannot hope that thought will survive without freedom. Islamic thought . . . equally requires a freedom by which dissent, confrontation of views, and debate between ideas is assured.

I am distressed, however, by Fazlur Rahman's bracketing of Pakistan, as a would-be ideological state, with Russia, China, and Israel. Complaining about a previous Pakistani regime's "hands off" policy of benign neglect towards private religious educational institutions, he writes,

> . . . in a state that claims to be based upon the ideology of Islam, what sense does it make to have private institutions that can deal with Islam as they choose? Can Russia or China allow private institutions to interpret communism as they like? . . . Suppose a private institution is established today in Pakistan with the purpose of teaching, say, Marxism. Will Pakistani authorities remain indifferent to it?

Thus, Fazlur Rahman seems to feel that an ideological state should both censor "alien ideologies" and enforce the teaching of its own version of its own ideology. Private institutions teaching any sort of ideology, if allowed to exist at all, would be very closely supervised. In these few sentences, Fazlur Rahman appears to contradict and counteract so much of the message of his entire book — the necessity for free thought, if only to enable the ongoing reinterpretation and reapplication of divine truths to ever-changing circumstance. Granted, that Fazlur Rahman's Islamic state would be much more tolerant than the Ayatollah Khomeini's. I'm not sure that it would be tolerant enough to suit me.

Elsewhere in the book, Fazlur Rahman complains that the "Americans' experience of state secularism made them utterly ill-tuned to a country like Pakistan (notwithstanding Israel!)." This bracketing of Pakistan with Israel is, I am afraid, appropriate. Disregarding for the moment questions of the nature of Zionism and the problems of the Palestinians, there are parallels between the two youthful states: Pakistan, a state founded as a homeland for Muslims, and Israel, a state founded as a homeland for Jews. Both were born out of terrible communal violence. The founding fathers of both states were secular and Western-oriented. But both states have drifted slowly towards greater "religification," and in both, small religious parties have attained an importance out of proportion to their backing among the populace, by playing on the fact that religion is seen as the *raison d'être* for both states' existence. While Alan Dowty (see *Commonweal*, July 15, 1983) assures us that there is little likelihood of a theocratic state developing in Israel, he refers to the tendency among Jewish religious fundamentalists to feel that they are morally justified in using illegal and sometimes violent means. He also writes that the problem of religious interference in the daily lives of non-orthodox Jews may in time become a very serious issue.

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IN EDWARD MORTIMER'S historical background material, or indeed in almost every history text, two features regarding religious fanaticism emerge again and again: the conspicuousness of both decadent lifestyles and puritanical religious fanaticisms in times of great stress and social instability, and the willingness of religious extremist groups to use any and all means to make their influence felt. A major preoccupation of every government in the Muslim world, whether colonial, nationalist, secular, or ideological, has been the handling of religious extremist groups. These groups, while always constituting a very small minority of the population, possess fanatical, tightly-knit, and highly disciplined memberships. Attempts to deal with religious extremists have generally backfired. Suppression by force helps lead to resurgence years later. Conciliatory compromises invite ever more outrageous demands and obnoxious behavior.

The problems posed by religious extremists are especially severe in societies like Pakistan in which democratic traditions have so far failed to establish a firm foothold. One of the chief difficulties in getting democratic processes to function in such places is the lack of a concept of "loyal opposition." Opposition parties tend to be seen as enemies of the state, or of its ideology, rather than as necessary critics of current policies. This difficulty is compounded yet again whenever religion is involved. In most religions, including Islam, one is searching for revealed Truth. Most people are not Fazlur Rahman and never will be. Many prefer doctrine to debate. In the Muslim world today, it is fashionable for all religious politics, whether Shia, Sunni, fundamentalist, or *ulema*, to refer to the existence of only two possible political parties; the party of God, or *Allah*, and the party of Satan, or *Shaitan*. The head of any religious party, or of any religiously oriented government, feels that he represents God's will, and that all political and/or ideological opponents are working against Islam and must therefore be crushed by whatever means necessary.

In Pakistan, for instance, the phrases "Islamic ideology" and "ideology of Pakistan" are used incessantly to justify the suppression of every sort of opposition and criticism. In Iran these days, exponents of several progressive interpretations of Islam are being brutally suppressed by a government composed of the traditional religious establishment (see *Commonweal*, Feb. 25, 1983). Fazlur Rahman takes a long view. While conceding that "at present Khomeini's influence is supreme," he optimistically notes that the influence of the more progressive thinkers "upon the younger generation of students is profound and is likely to reassert itself." I hope that he is right. In the meantime, I feel that calling for the enforcement of "Islamic ideology" in pre-democratic conditions is almost sure to do more harm than good.

I wish that Fazlur Rahman had given more than passing reference to "democratic process." The democratic process is a people's premier educational institution. The people of each Muslim country, or federation of Muslim countries, must learn from their mistakes while forging the systems appropriate to their environments and ethos. I agree with Fazlur Rahman that the Westernized elites' tactic of sweeping the Islamic ideology issue under the carpet with insincere promises was at best a stopgap solution which is now clearly no longer working. But only national debates held under conditions of guaranteed human rights can produce stable but flexible frameworks. Democracy and freedom of expression are moderating forces that can do much to limit the influence of extremists of various sorts. People everywhere, both for better and for worse, have the tendency to vote from the stomach. The Pakistani people, for instance, have never yet really discussed nor demanded an ideological state. But in this nation's one free and fair election in December 1970, the militant Jamaat-i-Islami party won only 2.9 percent of the seats in West (present-day) Pakistan, while the two *ulema*-based parties obtained 5.1 per cent each.

Religious extremists will always try to exploit ideological slogans in order to gain disproportionate power and influence for themselves. Although there is no recognized clergy in Islam, the *ulema* have come to form a powerful international interest group with almost one thousand years of political experience. Both the *ulema* and the militant fundamentalists must be obliged to play by the rules of the game. Thus the institution of such rules, in other words, a viable constitution, is a first priority in Muslim as in other politics. I think that we in the Muslim world must lend our support to those who are struggling for democracy and universal human rights. I also feel that Western non-Muslims are doing no one a favor by assuming a neutral attitude to what they would otherwise consider violations of human rights. Islam is a religion which offers itself to the whole world. It considers its message to be potentially attractive to everyone. It must thus consider itself answerable to general world opinion and to universally held standards of human behavior.

I AM AFRAID that I do not share Fazlur Rahman's belief in the efficacy of a modern liberal interpretation of Islam in bringing about a modern liberal Islamic state. One cannot help respecting Professor Rahman for his erudition and broadmindedness, and admiring him for his deep faith and unflagging efforts to rekindle the flames of Muslim intellectualism. One hopes that in the gothic calm of the University of Chicago campus, Fazlur Rahman and his colleagues and students are making good progress following his program of reconstruction. But for those of us living today amidst the winds of the "Islamic resurgence," and attempting to make ourselves useful — to teach, learn, do research, and educate

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our children inside these Muslim countries — Fazlur Rahman's suggestions seem almost as irrelevant as Edward Mortimer's assurances. In the end, both the totally noncommittal attitude of Edward Mortimer and the total commitment of Fazlur Rahman leave me deeply dissatisfied.

If, when Fazlur Rahman condemns secularism in our daily lives and in the education of our young people, he is condemning a moral relativism amounting to amorality, then I am with him and against secularism. I agree that we should raise our children to be deeply in tune with their religious heritage, and that we should encourage some of our brightest young people to study philosophy, religion, classical languages, and history, as well as subjects like engineering and medicine, so that they may contribute constructively to an ongoing debate on the nature of the state in a Muslim society. I think that Islamic (like Christian) values should be used to measure and criticize a government's efforts, or lack of effort, towards building a good and just society. But the seeds of intolerance which I find even in Fazlur Rahman's vision of an ideological state reinforce my belief in the advisability of the secular state.

This review was written over the Muslim festival of *Eid*. When father-in-law, husband, and son returned from *Eid* prayers, they summarized the day's sermon for me. The preacher had focused on the dangers of giving our children a secular education. Products of secular education, he warned, murder their mothers and fathers, refuse to get up on time for early morning prayers, and grow up to be the sorts of intellectuals who object to the wastage of tons of sacrificial meat bulldozed under the sand each *Eid* in Makkah (Saudi Arabia). As I sit wondering whether my children will turn out to be matricides, patricides, early morning prayer-shirkers, or, heaven forbid, *that* sort of intellectual, I read in the newspaper that this year, for the first time, sacrificial meat was airlifted out of Saudi Arabia and distributed to poor Muslims, including the Afghan refugees. Should I take this as a sign that time is on the side of the intellectual Muslim reformers like Fazlur Rahman, and against both the militant neo-revivalists and the traditional religious establishment? I am afraid that I am an incurable pessimist. I can't help but wonder: what does the future hold for the Muslim world in 1984?

Books: THE COMBUSTIBLE MIXTURE

INEVITABLE REVOLUTIONS
THE UNITED STATES
IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Walter LaFeber
Norton, $18.95, 357 pp.

THE CUBAN THREAT

Carla Anne Robbins
McGraw-Hill, $17.95, 351 pp.

Joseph A. Page

ON DECEMBER 2, 1983, President Ronald Reagan suggested to a group of visiting high school students that some of the political murders attributable to right-wing death squads in El Salvador might actually have been the work of leftist guerrillas. This assertion rested not upon any shred of objective evidence but rather upon the adaptation of reality to a Manichean world view which presently shapes the foreign policy of the United States. It would be more convenient for the president to ignore the grisly horrors which have become commonplace in our client states in Central America; whenever this becomes impossible, the next best approach is to muddle facts.

The Reagan administration was but several weeks old when it made public its interpretation of the violence convulsing Central America. In mid-February of 1981, the State Department issued a White Paper blaming the Soviet Union and Cuba for the insurgency in El Salvador. The document absorbed withering criticism from the press (even the *Wall Street Journal* riddled it) and failed to marshal either congressional or international support. Nevertheless, the notions that external forces are responsible for unrest in the region and that Cuba, acting under orders from Moscow, is the main source of the problem remained as centerpieces of United States policy toward the region.

As the government of El Salvador continued to make little progress in its struggle against Marxist rebels, as United States-backed "contras" operating from Honduras and Costa Rica attacked the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and as the military rulers of Guatemala indiscriminately killed peasants suspected of supporting subversives, Central America seemed at the brink of regional warfare. The administration countered by setting up a bipartisan commission, chaired by Henry Kissinger and charged with recommending both short- and long-term policy for Central America.

The report of the Kissinger Commission adopts the view that the roots of the crisis are both domestic and foreign, the former stemming from social and economic conditions, the latter attributable to Cuban and Soviet interference. The Commission calls for increased military aid from the United States and more than $8 billion in economic assistance over the next five years. A majority of the commissioners would condition military help to El Salvador upon improvements in the human-rights performance of its government.

Both *Inevitable Revolutions,* a study of how the United States has shaped the history of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, and *The Cuban Threat,* which assesses the actual challenge posed by Fidel Castro's regime to the interests of its neighbor to the north, provide essential background

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for the current debate over the report of the Kissinger Commission. Indeed, they ought to be required reading for members of Congress who will be deciding whether to implement its policy recommendations.

Professor Walter LaFeber, in *Inevitable Revolutions*, argues that economic and social injustice have always been the causes of unrest in Central America and that, with the exception of democratic Costa Rica, revolutions have become "virtually the only method of transferring power and bringing about needed change." The United States has consistently opposed efforts to bring about radical reform because "it wanted stability, benefited from the on-going system and was therefore content to work with the military-oligarchy complex that ruled most of Central America from the 1820s to the 1980s."

Manifestations of this policy form the baleful history of U.S. interventions — both direct, through the use of force, and indirect, through the application of diplomatic or economic measures. These include support for the Somoza dynasty, which plundered Nicaragua for over four decades; the CIA-sponsored overthrow of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz, a reformer whose ideas about land reform upset the United Fruit Company and the local oligarchs; and U.S. acceptance of the bloody Salvadoran dictator whose troops slaughtered 30,000 peasants in 1932.

The relationship which the United States has imposed upon Central America is, in LaFeber's view, one of "neodependency," whereby the interests of the latter have been subordinated to a fear of foreign influence which "distorts economic and political development without [the U.S.] taking direct political control."

Three factors have complicated this process by combining to form what LaFeber terms a "combustible mixture." The status quo which the United States has always opted to buttress derives from societies ruled for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, and hence is inherently unstable; despite the region's proximity to the United States, "there are few areas [in the world] about which North Americans are more ignorant"; and geographical proximity makes Central America an area of legitimate security interest for the United States.

Inevitable Revolutions offers no solutions to the dilemma currently facing the United States in Central America. But it does demonstrate that the prescriptions offered by the Kissinger Commission are neither new nor likely to succeed. The Alliance for Progress sought to pump into Latin America substantial economic aid, conditioned upon good-faith efforts by recipient nations to undertake reforms which would help eliminate the causes of popular discontent. Yet as LaFeber points out, "Alliance funds in massive amounts went to U.S.-owned firms and to the Central American oligarchs that controlled banks and mercantile businesses, as well as the best tillable land," and the power structures in these countries remained intact. Moreover, American citizens are likely to be as reluctant to dispense billions of tax dollars to prop up the status quo in Central America as they proved to be over the lifespan of the Alliance for Progress.

The challenge posed by the Cuban and Russian presence in Central America underlies the urgent calls by both the Reagan administration and the Kissinger Commission for increased U.S. military involvement in the region. *The Cuban Threat*, a brilliant and dispassionate analysis of the danger to U.S. interests posed by Fidel Castro, questions Washington's perception of Cuba's role in Central America, as well as in the rest of Latin America and in Africa.

Dr. Carla Anne Robbins carefully analyzes Castro's initial commitment to armed struggle in Latin America (which turns out to have been much more modest than what Washington feared or what Cuban propaganda claimed) and the conflicts it later engendered with the Soviet Union. The belief that the Cubans are responsible for the current unrest in Central America, she argues, is exactly the sort of overreaction which has consistently characterized the U.S. response to the Cuban revolution.

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Edmund Pennant
Beginning

First to return
was the mustard weed,
surprisingly golden
though thin;

then the wild carrot,
dusky white, the struts
of the umbels, thin.

It would take longer
for the first iris,
their petals dangling
like skin.

We who saw the flash
and remember no sound in
the epicenter, soon

will be gone. We pray
clean rain may purge all seeds
and render them benign, O Lord,
as in the beginning,

when the lion within the sun
roared roses, heal-all and violets
and wild vervain.

Edmund Pennant
The Saint

In the peripheral vision of history
he moves, a vagrant simpler than the era
that lost him, unknown to the police
but wanted wherever he goes.

Rescued by blackouts and April blizzards,
the world is his lair, any dim corner
his refuge from the forked tongue of Eden,
for whom doors open to no knocking.

And should reprieve by lapse of light or ice
fail him, and the wild engine of Armageddon
threaten to break the world with love and grief,
he may have no choice but to sling a stone

of dogma into the forehead of his Age,
and in the necessary rite of heroes,
hack off the offending head and offer
his own for the anointing, and then
the crown of garnets that will be his doom.

Lee Richard Hayman
Math

Reaching for the worm
Inside the garden's harvest
Caution is mashed in passion
Handily moonlit for a serpent
Answering shimmering questions
Regardless of the banishment
Dividing Eve from Eden, Adam for Apple.

John Nixon, Jr.
The General

While more affluent kids
Sprawled on lush carpets
To play with miniature electric
Versions of the Twentieth
Century Limited, he
At the north end of town,
Using the bare pine floor
As battleground, observed
How clumsily one fights a war
With soldiers made of lead.

LeRoy Smith
The Rejected Image

I do not know the man in the looking-glass
  Who stares at me with the falcon's deadly eye,
  As still and cold as the December hour
  Out of season that tells us we must die.
It is as if my shadow on the grass
  Had withered from me under a stranger's sky
  And left me falling as from a familiar tower
  Where all that I hold true had proved a lie.
I ask myself what warp of time and space
  This is in which I find myself alone
  And altered past the rescue of conceit:
I need a small parenthesis of grace
  Before I admit that, bred from Adam's bone,
  I reject my latter image as defeat.

Joseph Awad
Now and Then

Sister Gabriel was fond of asking
Our eighth grade class,
"Which are the two most important moments
In our lives?" And answering, "Now
And the hour of our death."

I imagine the two as crosshairs
On an assassin's sight,
Always approaching each other
Until they coincide.

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Her conclusion ought to be pondered carefully: "The real Cuban threat may be the reaction that forces the United States into untenable alliances with right-wing regimes, involves the United States in unpopular and often illegal overseas entanglements, alienates many of its citizens, and undercuts its prestige and influence abroad."

Thoughtful Americans have always despaired the fact that their country always seems to line up on the side of the "bad guys" in its foreign commitments. These books help explain why.

Pilgrims on spiritual journeys

THE PASSIONATE LIFE
Sam Keen
Harper & Row, $14.95, 274 pp.

SPIRITUAL PASSAGES
Benedict Groeschel
Crossroad, $12.95, 210 pp.

THE FIRE OF YOUR LIFE
Maggie Ross
Paulist, $5.95, 143 pp.

A LISTENING HEART
David Steindl-Rast
Crossroad, $5.95, 95 pp.

William James O'Brien

IN the opening pages of his *Reasons of the Heart*, John S. Dunne introduces the striking image of a man emerging out of a desert wilderness to utter enigmatically to T.E. Lawrence, who had himself just emerged from bathing in an oasis, "The love is of God, and from God, and to God." Lawrence provided breakfast for the haggard stranger and attempted to engage him in conversation, but the man remained silent and finally returned to the desert having said not another word.

The man becomes for Dunne an image of the "child of God," a phrase with several connotations. On the one hand, the phrase has been used to refer to unwanted infants left to die outside the city gates and, by extension, to all who live marginal lives cut off from the human city which will not incorporate them. On the other hand, the phrase also has a biblical sense and speaks of an abiding relationship with the giver of life and identifies the basis for citizenship in the city of God.

Dunne goes on to describe a double movement undertaken by those who respond to the invitation to embark on the spiritual journey, to enter into the to and fro with God. The first movement is into the region where one is most alone, into solitude; the second is back to the human circle. The image of the man who speaks the single sentence is both sign and warning. As sign he points to a destination beyond the self for which anyone might set out. As warning he is himself one who has become lost beyond himself in a region the human sciences know nothing about, unable to return to the human circle.

In different ways, each of the works selected here for review attempt to map the *spiritual* journey Dunne speaks of. David Steindl-Rast's *A Listening Heart* offers profound insight into the movement into solitude, a movement undertaken deliberately in the monastic life and yet a movement that one does not have to be a hermit to make. Sam Keen has much more to say about the movement into the human circle, trusting that his penetration of his own individual life story will afford him access to the whole human story as well. Maggie Ross's *The Fire of Your Life*, divided liturgically into months from December to December in order to begin appropriately with Advent, is a personal record of her own pilgrimage. And like the chronicles of medieval pilgrims, her observations afford a glimpse not only of the march but also of the dark world through which she courses, not aimlessly like the vagabond but mindfully in the manner of a pilgrim moving in tune with the liturgy.

Finally, Benedict Groeschel's *Spiritual Passages* offers an elaborate reminder that the "child of God" who sets out on a spiritual journey stands to benefit from humanist psychology's contributions toward understanding aberrations which any right-minded individual would prefer to avoid. At the same time, Groeschel has apprenticed himself to the company of spiritual masters who know well that children of God are not always profoundly disturbed but frequently eminently sane, not always in need of repair as much as of understanding. For that task he finds contemporary developmental psychologists most apt to offer assistance to the person who is less interested in adjustment and more interested in conversion.

Beyond their insights into the life that opens before one who embarks upon the spiritual journey, each work also addresses the perplexing questions of the mean-

REVIEWERS

JOSEPH A. PAGE, *a professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, is the author of* Peron: A Biography *(Random House).*

WILLIAM JAMES O'BRIEN *is the author of* Stories to the Dark: Explorations in Religious Imagination *(Paulist).*

IRVING MALIN'S *books include* Saul Bellow's Fiction, The Achievement of Carson McCullers, *and* Conrad Aiken's Prose.

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ing and value of the contemplative vocation itself in the present, critical moment. For me one of the most difficult questions to live with now is presented in the recent Italian film, *The Night of the Shooting Stars*. Near the end, the leader of a remnant of survivors sits by a town fountain, alone with infernal memories of a long day's journey. He alone had seen through the treachery of fascists who had ordered the townspeople to gather in the cathedral. He had counseled, and then led, the flight toward advancing Allied forces. At the fountain, like Rodin's Thinker perched above the "Gate of Hell," the old man ponders the events of that day of flight, searching in vain for a shred of meaning. In the mirror of his memory are the present hells of campesinos caught in the crossfire between latter-day fascists and would-be liberators.

The film raises disturbing questions for the contemplative. What *is* the contemplative life in the present age? Is it a life in which there is no night of the shooting stars? Can the contemplative make sense of a search for God in a "professional [monastic] environment" (Steindl-Rast) at a polite remove from mangled and mutilated corpses? Is the solitary seeker, or the seeker in community, called to a timeless life of at-oning with God, absolved from responsibility for the present historic moment?

Maggie Ross meets the question most directly. Asked "Why are you a hermit?" she responds simply "I can't do anything else." But what about the holocaust?

> How do I understand holocaust, any holocaust? I don't. I hope to spend the rest of my life in the exploration of the awful knowledge of man as both priest and sacrifice, persecutor and victim, executioner and redeemer . . . in the hope of seeing God with my own eyes, I melt away; I become one with these ashes, and repent.

David Steindl-Rast understands that

> the real task is learning to listen. The very word *obedience* comes from ob-audire, which means to listen intently. Its opposite is to be utterly deaf, and the word for this is literally *ab-surdus*. Everything is absurd until we learn to listen to its meaning. . . . To listen you have to be silent . . . like . . . a forester totally mindful of the game he is stalking.

In the monastary, space has been carefully prepared and time taken to absorb the shock of events that incline one to despair. "To be present where we are means to wake up to this place." Mindful in-gathering even of present hells is carried on in hopes that even the night of the shooting stars will find its ultimate context not in an Inferno but in a Paradiso.

Yet while it may be true that the life of the contemplative makes more sense than ever in times like our own, the challenges presented to one who embraces that calling are awesome. Benedict Groeschel speaks most directly to the questions raised by the film when he warns that

> spiritually minded people . . . since they themselves try to be fair and giving . . . lose sight of the fact that we live in a wicked world. Frequently they cannot cope with injustice so they do not see it; when they do see it, they remain silent.

However, adds Groeschel,

> A person interested in spiritual growth must overcome the tendency to remain aloof from things of material concern. He or she should nourish a constant, dedicated interest in those who suffer from injustice. The more one can directly associate with the victims of injustice, share their lot, plead their cause and defend them, the more one will grow spiritually. . . . We must . . . recognize the oppressed, the poor, the defrauded and trapped as our only hope of finding God in this world.

CORRECTION

Omitted from the featured listing of "Human Family" books in our March 23rd issue: The complete list of "Human Family" books can be obtained by writing to: The National Conference of Christians and Jews, 43 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10019.

The extraordinary vision, the grim city

MARCOVALDO

Italo Calvino

Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, $9.95, 121 pp.

Irving Malin

MARCOVALDO is an ordinary citizen of an Italian city. He dislikes his job, but he must work to survive and to help his family to survive — barely. In the twenty stories which are in effect different "seasons" of his soul, Marcovaldo is really not different from the average man; he is trapped in the never-ending repetitions of time.

But Calvino insists that Marcovaldo has an imagination, a special gift for seeing the extraordinary in the grimly realistic city. And it is this imagination — this "shaping spirit" — which enables his hero to rise, if only momentarily, above his predicaments.

Every story turns swiftly from "realism" to "fantasy" — and back again. Marcovaldo sees an odd mushroom in the cracks of the sidewalk; a maze of snowy forms; a blinking commercial sign which is shaped like the moon (and the moon itself). These transformations occur swiftly, Calvino apparently implies, because the average man has only brief encounters with the obscure, the uncanny, the transcendental shining, before he is forced to return to earth.

In the fourth story Calvino writes: "Streets and avenues stretched out, endless and deserted, like blanched chasms between mountainous cliffs. There was no telling whether the city hidden under that mantle was still the same or whether in the night, another had taken its place. Who could say if under those white mounds there were still gasoline pumps, news-stands, tram stops, or if there were only sack upon sack of snow?" I have quoted the passage at length because it

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secretly indicates Marcovaldo's personality, Calvino's technique, and the marriage of these two "essences."

Snow erases the clarity and order of "everyday life"; it is a gift because it adds mystery and "oddity" to routine. It is, if you will, an annual rite of transformation — and an imaginative present from *above*. Calvino suggests, then, that snow changes reality, upsetting ordinary, common designs. Marcovaldo — like his creator — worships the changes, the opposing cities; he compounds visionary activity by imagining a *perfect* order in which snow would last forever and blot the daily pumps.

Calvino recognizes sadly — as does Marcovaldo — that reality rudely imposes itself. Some children come along; they hope to make snowmen and, comically, they put a carrot into frozen Marcovaldo's mouth. Thus it seems that "cruelty" wins — at the expense of "vision."

It is, however, clear that although Marcovaldo becomes a fool, he nevertheless triumphs. He cannot, after all, have carrots thrust into his soul, his consciousness; and he remains always more than a silly clown or drudge.

Calvino is offering a "saint's life," although he never uses religious terms (except, perhaps, in the last story). He affirms that Marcovaldo suffers daily — as we all do — but that he accepts his suffering and moves beyond it to affirm those unexpected moments of grace — eternal gestures of a truly imaginative creator — the Lord Himself.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 194)

fear. I wish I could paint her face. Perhaps a pregnant woman alone, abandoned by all those who profess to love her can be the new symbol of the suffering Christ present in the world today. We need such images to call forth our own ability to give life on all levels, for it has certainly called forth our disgust and loathing on a national level. I wish I could paint her face.

MARY STUDER SHEA

Classified

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Religious Community

Considering Religious Life? Founded to ransom slaves, our small community of men have grounded our lives and our work of liberation in fraternity, prayer, and the Bible for over 800 years. Write Fr. Bill Axe, The Trinitarian Friars, P.O. Box 5719, Baltimore, MD 21208; or call Collect (301) 484-2250.

Biblical Institute

19th Biblical Institute, Trinity College, Burlington, VT 05401, June 17-22. Faculty: Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Paul Achtemeier, Philip J. King, Elizabeth Achtemeier. Write: Sr. Miriam Ward.

Priesthood

Desire Priesthood? 30 to 50? Completed B.A.? 1-800-633-2252, Father Nigro, Gonzaga University, Spokane 99258.

Journals

Journal-ers: The Bible workbook-journal "Astonish Me, Yahweh!" will guide and stir you to talk with and know God. Write or call for free catalog. LuraMedia, 10227 Autumnview Ln., Suite 2, San Diego, CA 92126; (619) 578-1948.

Homosexual Catholics: A New Primer for Discussion, $2.25 pre-paid NWM Publications, 4012 29th St., Mt. Rainier, MD 20712. (Bulk rates available). (301) 277-5674.

Priest Workshop

On preaching Penance and hearing confessions. Conducted by Redemptorist theologians and preachers at oceanfront retreat house. Practical. July 16-19; July 23-26. San Alfonso, 755 Ocean Ave., West End, N.J. 07740 (201) 222-2731. Cost $125, deposit $25.

Human Rights

Good Friday liturgies, other action/reflection resources on international human rights. American Christians for the Abolition of Torture, 300 W. Apsley, Philadelphia 19144.

Positions Available

Bread for the World, a Chistian citizens' lobby organization on food and hunger issues, is seeking to fill the following positions. Christian faith perspective is essential. Salary based on need. Send resumé, writing samples w. 3 prof. refs. by April 13 to Sharon Pauling, BFW, 802 Rhode Island Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20018. REGIONAL ORGANIZER: organize conferences, local chapters, and statewide networks; speak before groups, give media interviews, train grassroots leaders. Requirements: 2 yrs. prof. organizing experience, knowledge of hunger and poverty issues, willingness to travel up to 12 wks. per year. POLICY ANALYST: develop and communicate BFW policy and legislative strategy on long-term hunger issues, such as trade, debt, and unemployment. Requirements: background in economics, development, and poverty issues; lobbying, analytical, and communication skills. EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS STAFF ASSOCIATE: develop and produce educational materials on hunger issues, such as study guides, theological aids, curriculum aids, training tools, and background papers. Requirements: skills and experience in educational design, writing, and editing. ORGANIZING INTERNS: work with experienced organizer to organize conferences, local chapters, state-wide networks and field trips. Interns will learn skills in public speaking, using the media, lobbying Congress, and organizing grassroots networks. Requirements: 1-to-2 yr. commitment, organizing experience, 12 weeks of travel per year, knowledge of hunger and poverty issues, communication skills. Stipend: $6,000 per year plus health insurance. Application deadline: April 13. Positions begin in June.

Continuing Education

Leadership training and renewal for Religious, laity and Clergy in spiritual direction, pastoral ministry, prayer, formation, directed retreats. Nine months, certificate. community experience with 50, worldwide. Classes, workshops, scripture, theology, spirituality, human development — 30-day retreat. Focus, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA 99258. (509) 328-4220.

Flutes

Bamboo flutes, recordings. Niemi, General Delivery, Mountainview, HI 96771.

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This April 6 Issue provides a good sample of the variety, range, and timeliness of the comment *Commonweal* consistently presents to its subscribers issue after issue. Consider the following recent articles:

Public Affairs: J.Bryan Hehir: "The Case of Grenada" . . . Marie Winn: "Lunch with Mr. Reagan" . . . Bishop Francisco P. Claver: "Martial Law in the Philippines" . . . Nancy Amidei: "Task Force on Hunger." . . . Gordon L. Bowen: "Guatemalan Totalitarianism" . . . Isabel Rogers: "Central American Refugees" . . . James O'Gara: "Ireland's Irreligious War."

Religion: Hans Küng: "Dying with Christian Dignity" . . . John Garvey: "The Moral Majority" . . . Special Issue on Abortion and the Congress . . . James Tunstead Burtchaell: "A New Pastoral Method of Theology" . . . Juan-Lorenzo Hinojosa: "Catholic Charismatics" . . . Cornel West: "Whither Liberation Theology?" . . . The Editors: "In Defense of the American Church."

Literature and the Arts: Eleanor B. Wymard: "The Secular Faith of Barbara Pym" . . . Michael Harrington: "James Merrill's 'Changing Light'" . . . Anne Porter: A Selection of Poems . . . Lawrence D. Hogan: "The Gift of Alvin White" . . . Nicolaus Mills: "The Vision of Fairfield Porter" . . . David R. Carlin, Jr.: "White House Literary Life."

Scheduled for Future Issues: Donald Evans: "Can We Know Spiritual Reality?" . . . Peadar Kirby: "Is Irish Catholicism Dying?" . . . Camille d'Arienzo, R.S.M.: "Nuns and Their Habits" . . . Sidney Callahan: "The Percys of Mississippi" . . . James Tindell: "Non-violent Warfare" . . . John Rodden: "Orwell and Catholicism" . . . Patrick W.Collins: "Liturgical Renewal — 20 Years Later."

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